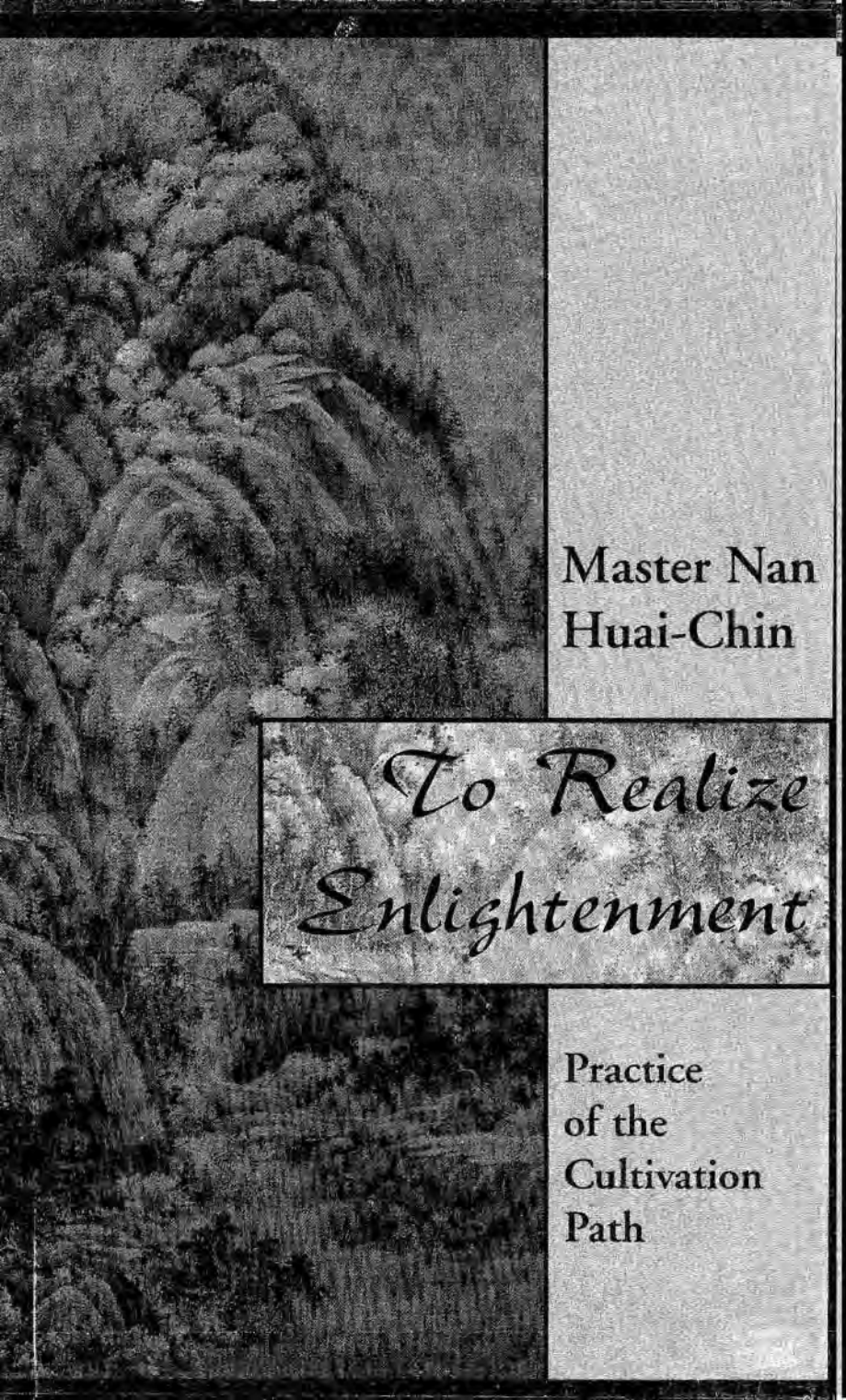

Master Nan Huai-Chin

To Realize Enlightenment

Practice of the Cultivation Path

$14.95 / Oriental Philosophy

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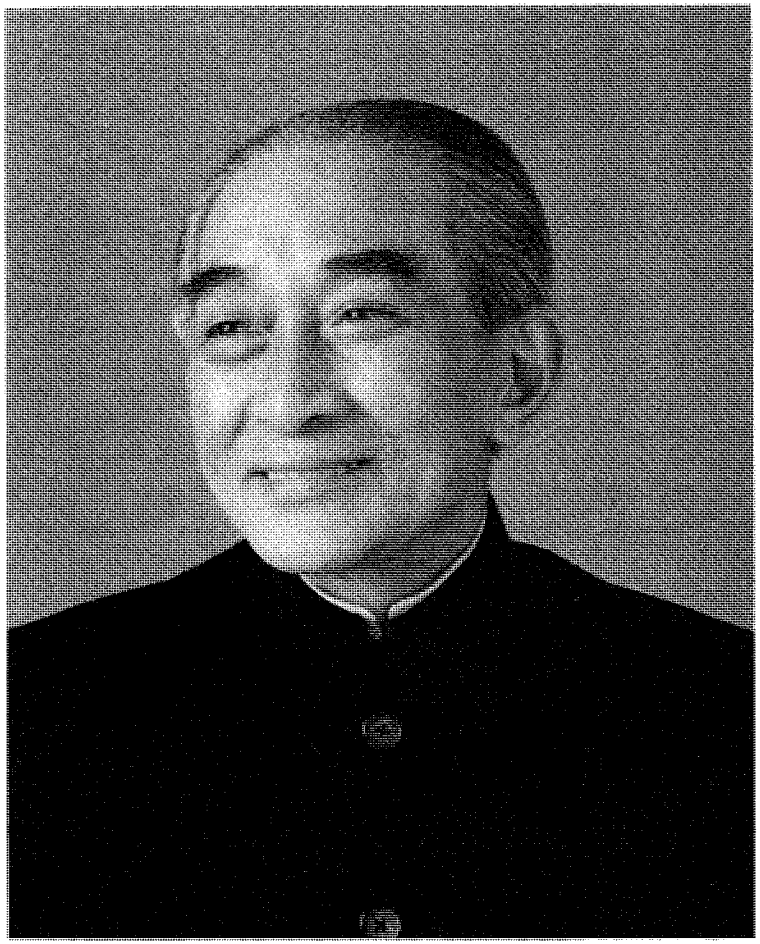

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Preface

This is the second half of Nan Huai-Chin's *How To Cultivate and Practice the Buddha Dharma*, a series of lectures on cultivating enlightenment, translated into English from the Chinese through the excellence of J. C. Cleary. The first half of the lecture series, which establishes the proper framework and appropriate references for understanding the path to enlightenment, can be found in the companion volume, *Working Toward Enlightenment*, also published by Samuel Weiser.

Whenever I read these lectures, which touch upon aspects of cultivation science which are rarely revealed, I get extremely worried. In my library are several thousand books on cultivation from all sorts of teachers, on all sorts of subjects, and from all sorts of schools—Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Taoist, Buddhist, Moslem, New Age, whatever—but none of them are conversant with the materials presented in these lectures. So when I read this book and reflect on what is currently available from other sources, both new and old, it becomes readily apparent that Nan Huai-Chin's grasp of cultivation principles and practices is absolutely incredible, far beyond almost anything else available to the seeker. If this individual isn't an expert, I don't know who is—but that's an opinion you'll have to form yourself. Certainly his views on Zen serve to redefine the field and I personally know of no contemporary who can stand up to him in terms of theory, practice, or attainment in this field.

And so I get scared, scared because Nan Huai-Chin is advancing in years and this great resource and treasure house will one day no longer be available for consultation, when his teachings are just beginning to become available in English. Until now, the Western world has for the most part been unaware of the existence of this great master, who can just as readily discuss the important questions of science, logic or philosophy as he can discuss history, religion, morality and cultivation. Nan Huai-Chin always answers questions according to the preparation of his questioner: those who have learned a lot are given

more than those who know very little. As Westerners tend to be more probing and more science oriented than Asian counterparts, and as the genuine cultivation route in the West definitely needs to be unearthed from beneath the rubble of New Age chaos, my hope is that the Western experts in this field will discover his existence and ask the definitive questions before it's too late. As these lectures show, this is definitely the individual who can establish the proper framework for cultivation practice to last hundreds of years, enabling cultivation to prosper with the respect it is due, assuming its rightful place in society. But if the truth and insights of cultivation are not made known at this juncture, when religion carries less importance than science—which is reducing behavior and everything else to chemicals, genes and physics—and when the New Age movement is propagating wild and crazy notions as the practice of self-cultivation, the pathway to self-realization may be cut off. Such are my personal fears.

So when I read this series of lectures on the cultivation pathway and know what else Nan Huai-Chin has to offer, I am sad that so few know it's available. If we are lucky enough to break the historical pattern, Nan Huai-Chin's knowledge can become widely disseminated so people qualified to ask the important questions can clarify matters before the chance no longer exists.

Some may feel that such concerns are basically propaganda, but it is impossible to read the material in these lectures and deny that the author is a worthwhile source to be consulted. The insights on Zen alone, not to mention a simplification of Esoteric Buddhism and the scientific analysis of Taoism, correct many mistaken notions prevalent today. Furthermore, it is astounding to realize that this material was provided in impromptu lectures! In the past, Zen monks would travel all over the country in order to find a master with even a bit of experiential insight, who could help point them in the right direction for cultivation. How rare to find a master who was an expert on other matters as well. This is the opportunity presently before us, and I hope it is put to good use.

—WSB

1

ELIMINATING THE VIEW OF THE BODY

In China and overseas, those who lecture on the Zen School generally like to investigate meditation cases and then enter into critical theoretical discussions, and that's about all. However, if we wish to truly investigate the Zen School, there are three things that we must study: seeing the truth of the Buddha's teachings, cultivating realization, and carrying out the bodhisattva vows. You must therefore do meditation work yourself after you come upon the enlightenment teachings, such as are given in these chapters. Otherwise, it is useless. Without the actual practice of cultivating realization, to say someone is a Zen student or even understands Zen or the path to enlightenment is just plain lip service, and there's no way around this truth. Unfortunately, too many people hold the view that Zen is just some psychological game, or that they understand Zen when they can't even generate the lowest stage of *samadhi*. How can one deceive themselves into believing that they understand even an inkling of Zen if they haven't been able to generate *samadhi*, the most basic requirement for proficiency of the path? Even professors and experts who teach this material in universities feel it is only a matter of scholarship to be able to comprehend the matter. Intellectual reasoning is just another spinning of the sixth consciousness whereas the practice of meditation is the actual entry into the dharma.

In cultivating realization, we cannot depart from the elementary steps of calming the mind and attaining *samadhi*. The reason that people cannot achieve *samadhi* in their cultivation of practice is not due to theory, but because they do not properly temper and attune their bodies and minds. In particular, the barriers to *samadhi* associated with the physical body are quite numerous, and present a great obstacle on the path to enlightenment. The view of the body is the hardest thing to get rid of, for as soon as we sit down to meditate and cultivate *samadhi*, the view of the body and the barriers associated with the body are there. Therefore, if we cannot get rid of the view of the body, it will be absolutely impossible to enter the realm of *samadhi* as the preliminary step on the path.

How can you then get rid of the view of the body? In terms of the methods of cultivating practice, one solution is to cultivate the breath as it moves in and out. Tibetan Esoteric Buddhism can offer guidance here because it places special emphasis on cultivating the breath, cultivating the *ch'i* channels, cultivating the bright points, and cultivating kundalini energy. The Esoteric Buddhist practice of cultivating the breath is a route containing an orderly sequence, but if this route is not cultivated properly, there is no way to seek to realize enlightenment. Esoteric Buddhism has its own reasons for being so emphatic about this.

By cultivating the breath as it moves in and out, at the very least you will get rid of sickness and extend your lifespan. Nevertheless, our purpose in cultivating the Path is certainly not to rid ourselves of sickness or extend our lives or rejuvenate ourselves. But if we can make our bodies and minds healthy, calming both our physical and mental natures, the work of seeking realization of the Path will be easier.

So suppose we really and truly want to seek realization of the Buddha Dharma, what should we then do? Cultivating discipline, concentration, and wisdom is the nondualistic method to proceed from. There is only this one single route by which to seek realization of the fruit of enlightenment.

If we speak of maintaining discipline, the first priority is that we must restrain lustful thoughts. This includes sexual behavior, sexual impulses, masturbation, self-gratification, nocturnal emissions, and so on and so forth. On this point there is a difference between the Mahayana and the Hinayana codes of discipline. In the Hinayana code for seeking to realize the fruit of enlightenment, the very first precept is a prohibition on lust, whereas the first precept of the Mahayana code prohibits killing. The Hinayana code considers overt sexual behavior as a violation of the precepts, and likewise sexual longings. For instance, when Buddha was in the world, there was a Buddhist nun who was raped by bandits. Buddha said that because this nun's thoughts did not stir while she was being raped, she had not violated the precepts and this is an example of the Hinayana code of discipline. Other sexual manifestations, like nocturnal emissions of semen during dreams, and dreams of sexual partners, are also counted as violations of the precepts. Among celibate men who study the Buddhist Path, nocturnal emissions constituting "leakage," are particularly common and a difficult problem to be dealt with.

In the path of the Mahayana bodhisattvas, letting enlightenment leak away is what counts as a violation of the precepts. It doesn't matter whether this happens with or without thoughts or dreams: it always counts as a violation. Thus, if you want to seek the power of *samadhi* in both body and mind, this point is very difficult to master. However, the most difficult aspect to this is the psychological issue.

Nocturnal emissions without dreams are a violation of discipline brought about by the habit-energy of the seeds in the storehouse consciousness. To solve this problem and make it so that the semen does not leak out, you can cultivate the "flying bird form" of exercise. The "flying bird form" consists of three basic steps. Every day before you go to sleep, stand up with your heels two inches apart. The first step is to tighten the muscles in your buttocks without contracting your anus: if you do that for a long time, it may cause hemorrhoids. Simultaneously, pull in your lower abdomen. The second step is to take both hands and make the motions of a bird flying. Slowly, in a natural manner, lift them up. Your movements should be gentle and your mouth should be smiling slightly. Your shoulders should be relaxed. Both hands should be out on either side of your body, not extended toward the front or the back. Lift your hands very naturally, the slower the better. At the same time you raise your hands, raise your heels, matching the upward movements.

The third step is to lightly close your mouth when you lower your hands, and at the same time slowly lower your heels in a synchronized way. When you stand up, use the strength of your big toes. Remember that throughout all of this, your form must be beautiful and gentle, the more gentle the better. The point of emphasis should be on the tips of your fingers. When you raise your hands, there will be a spontaneous flow of energy into your fingertips. Once it reaches your hands and turns, the energy will pull them, and they will naturally come down. This is the form of a white crane when it is about to take flight.

If you do this "flying bird form" every evening before you go to sleep it will help eliminate nocturnal emissions. At the beginning, you should do it ten times every evening before retiring. As you are doing it, your thigh muscles may ache, but later on this will gradually improve and you can slowly increase the number of repetitions.

After performing this posture, you should add another action if you want to make your body healthy, "send the vitality back to repair the brain," increase your longevity and avoid aging. If you perform

these postures every day, your nearsightedness and farsightedness will both improve.

The other action to add to the "flying bird form" is this. First, use the middle knuckles of your thumbs to massage the two bony protuberances at the back of your head, rubbing in a circular pattern. First do this 36 times in a clockwise direction, and then 36 times in the opposite direction without a pause. The brain's visual nerves are located in this region.

Second, use the middle knuckle of your index fingers and rub the sides of your nose between your eyes. Here there are two small indentations: these are two acupuncture points. In the past I suffered from redness, swelling and pain in both eyes. I told a friend to use acupuncture on these two points, and I was immediately cured.

Third, without moving your hands from the sides of your nose, rub both eye sockets at the same time. These are the bony structures around the eyes. Rub them with clockwise circular motion, the harder the better, and then in the opposite direction. How many times you rub is up to you.

Fourth, without taking your hands away from your eyes, next move them to the *T'ai-yang* acupuncture point where you should also press and rub.

Fifth, close your eyes and clench your teeth, and hold your head in your palms. Next take both ears and cover them with your hands turned upside down. With both hands you should drum on the back of the head, tapping with your fingers on the middle of the back of the head. Students of martial arts call this "sounding the heavenly drum," and it is a common practice in Taoism.

If you do these practices, your head will feel refreshed, and you will eliminate headaches. Later on you will gradually reach the stage of really "sending back the vitality to repair the brain" and experiencing longevity without aging.

This set of actions is definitely related to the Taoist arts of refining vitality and transforming energy and the "flying bird form" is very effective with the problem of nocturnal emissions of semen. As for the psychological component of nocturnal emissions and sexual arousal, you must gradually do meditation work yourself in order to eliminate it.

The Taoist practice of "drinking in the breath," which means moving your mouth like a fish, extending it and then closing it, and drinking in the air is another method that should also be introduced

at this point. When you reach a certain stage in meditation work, you can stop eating grain and then you must "drink in the breath" to nourish yourself. This stage will occur after you are able to restore your vitality. So, know that these forms of work are all things that aid the Path: they help in cultivating the Path. They are also methods of treating ailments.

A further issue is the following. When we sit in meditation, false thoughts are not easy to stop, and it is not easy to get the body healthy. That's why I am teaching all of you how to cultivate the breath as it moves in and out. The T'ien-t'ai School viewed this method as especially important, and developed it into the methods of counting breaths, listening to the breath, and tempering the breath. The various sects of Tibetan Esoteric Buddhism also attach special importance to this, and they were absolutely right.

The Dharma Gate of cultivating the breath is not the fruit of the path of enlightenment, but it can enable us to realize the fruit of enlightenment more easily. The T'ien-t'ai School in its method of the lesser cessation and contemplation names six kinds of breath associated with different parts of the body. This is simply a method for tempering and attuning the body. Many people misunderstand this fact and these exercises, so right now I will outline the topic again.

When you stand up, and your arms are hanging at your side, as soon as you move your hands as you please, the breath goes into them. This is like what happens when you are doing the "flying bird form," and you tighten the muscles of your buttocks, and the breath goes there. This is the key.

Let's take as an example the breath the T'ien-t'ai method calls "blowing." All you have to do is be conscious when the breath is emitted that you don't need to emit any sound. As the breath is exhaled, the lower abdomen naturally sinks in. When the breath is completely blown out to the point that there is no more breath that can be blown out, you must stop the sound. Once the mouth is closed, the nose naturally will draw in the breath. You should do this several times, and then stop, and listen to the sound. Listen until breathing and thoughts are focused: when there are no more miscellaneous thoughts, you will spontaneously empty out.

Why do they teach us to temper our breathing before we sit and meditate? Because for the average person it is not easy to temper the breath properly, it is better to do some rough breathing first. When the breathing is coarse, it is called *feng* "wind," and when it is fine it is

called *ch'i* "breath." When the breath reaches the point where it seems it is not moving in or out, the most rarefied subtle form is called *hsi* "respiration." It is this most rarefied subtle form of breathing, not the coarse form and not the Taoist method of refining the *ch'i*, that is referred to in the T'ien-t'ai methods of counting breaths, listening to the breath, and tempering the breath. Why is it that there are three levels of the breath distinguished? This is a scientific question which we will not talk about for now.

After you sit down to meditate, it is best to first cultivate "wind" (the coarse form of breathing) while holding your hands in the *hai-mu* mudra (the Esoteric School's term); this is what is called the "orchid hand position" in Peking opera. When refining the breath, you must square your shoulders and let your arms extend straight, with your hands at your pelvic bone (except if they are too long or too short). Once you extend your arms, your shoulders will naturally straighten, and your internal organs will also naturally be extended, and then the breath will pervade them all. Thus, there is no choice but to use this posture.

In the next step, as your nose draws in the breath, your lower abdomen will naturally contract. The breath fills you to the point that you cannot breathe in anymore, and then you expel the breath. When you breathe in, it is fine, long, and slow. When you let it out it is coarse, short, and fast.

Keep doing this over and over again. When you get filled with breath, you will be able to do it without thinking. At this point, not many false thoughts will be arising. Later, when the intermediate level of "breath" is transformed into the most rarefied level of "respiration," your mental state will spontaneously become peaceful and still. You will feel your nose breathing in and out in a most rarefied subtle way. In this type of practice you must not separate your thoughts and your breath: when you breathe in, know you are breathing in, and when you breathe out, know you are breathing out. When you breathe in a warm breath, know that it is warm and when you breathe in a cool breath, know that it is cool. Thoughts and breaths must be joined together from beginning to end: you cannot let them separate. If there is a single moment when you are not aware of your breath, you are already engaged in false thoughts.

Go on practicing like this very, very slowly. When you really reach the point that for a moment mind and breath are truly joined as one, this is what the cultivation method of the Esoteric School calls

"mind and wind joining." "When mind and wind join as one, then you attain the freedom of spiritual powers." At this point, it goes without saying that you can rid yourself of sickness and prolong your lifespan and become rejuvenated.

When you feel mind and breath are synchronized, slowly over time, it will seem that the breathing has stopped, and that thoughts have been emptied out. Then, even though there are a few floating gossamer strands of miscellaneous thoughts, they won't interfere with anything. This is the easiest method for attaining *samadhi* and the easiest method for realizing the fruit of enlightenment. There is no other road besides this, when it comes to deliberate contrived meditation work: this is how critical it is. As I said before, just studying Zen stories won't do it. Entry is through the gate of practice.

Now let us turn to the story of Zen master Yun-men's enlightenment which comes from volume 20 of *The Record of Pointing at the Moon*: "Zen master Wen-yen of Kuang Feng Temple on Yun-men Mountain in Shao-chou. He was a native of Chia-hsing City in Chekiang province, and his family name was Chang. When he was young he became a monk under the guidance of Vinaya master Chih-ch'eng of the King of Emptiness Temple."

This teacher belonged to the Vinaya School, which strictly upheld the code of monastic discipline. Since Yun-men had taken refuge with this kind of teacher, his cultivation of practice was very strict and rigorous from the beginning. You must pay attention to this point. Most people who read the Zen stories of enlightenment never realize all the work that went in ahead of time.

Describing Yun-men's character the account says: "He was quick by nature with inborn intelligence, and naturally endowed with unlimited eloquence." In other words he was exceptionally intelligent, and even before he was enlightened, he was unusually eloquent.

"When he grew up, he shaved his head, and he received full ordination at the Pi-ling altar." Accepting the full set of precepts means accepting the three sets of major precepts: the precepts for novices, the precepts for monks, and the precepts for bodhisattvas. The Pi-ling altar was in Nanking. After accepting the precepts in his 20s, Yun-men returned to spend several years with the teacher he had originally taken refuge with. The account says: "He made an exhaustive study of the vinaya section of the Buddhist canon." At this time he had made an unusually deep study of the theory and

practice of the Vinaya School. He not only entered deeply into the theory: at the same time he worked on it in practice.

True members of the Vinaya School do not only keep to the guidelines when they are walking, standing, sitting, and lying down. There are indeed rules of comportment for walking, standing, sitting, and lying down. But real adherence to the precepts of discipline means you must be in *samadhi* at all times. This is why the Mahayana consider that letting *samadhi* leak away is a violation of discipline. Why must you behave properly when taking a walk? Because you must be in *samadhi* at all times, and you cannot have any thoughts scattering in confusion.

So at this time Yun-men was already working at Buddhism. With his extreme intelligence, he was doing meditation work at all times. But "since he had not yet clarified his own matter, he went to visit Mu-chou." He did not think his own meditation work was enough, and he recognized he was not enlightened—the great matter was not finished, his mind was not at peace and so he went to visit Master Mu-chou.

Now Master Mu-chou was very extraordinary at the time. After he was enlightened, Master Mu-chou did not live in a temple, because he had to take care of his aged mother personally. The monastic code determines that it is a violation of the precepts for someone who is a monk to take temple funds to support his own parents in lay life. For this reason, Master Mu-chou did not live in a temple, nor accept support from the laity. Instead, he himself worked every day making straw sandals which he sold, using the money to buy rice for his mother.

During the Huang Ch'ao rebellion (late ninth century), when the rebels reached the vicinity of Mu-chou City, the residents were terrified. Everyone went looking for Master Mu-chou because they knew he was enlightened (and they thought he could somehow help them). Master Mu-chou therefore told them to take the straw sandals he had made and hang them on the city gate. Finally, when Huang Ch'ao's troops arrived, they found all the gates of the city barred and a multitude of celestial soldiers standing guard. How could Huang Ch'ao believe this? So he ordered his men to attack the city, with the result that they were inexplicably defeated. Later, when he saw a pair of straw sandals on the city gate, he knew that the great Dharma teacher Ch'en of Mu-chou was living there. Knowing Master Mu-chou was a famous filial son, Huang Ch'ao withdrew his troops from the city

and went away. This episode is not recorded in the official history of the period, whose compilers thought it was a legend. Thus Mu-chou was a lay monk in the Zen School, what the Buddhist scriptures call an elder, meaning an eminent lay Buddhist. This is the man Yun-men went to see.

The records say that when Mu-chou saw Yun-men coming, he closed the door and did not pay any attention to him at all. "Yun-men then knocked on the door. Mu-chou said: 'Who is it?' Yun-men said: 'It's me.' Mu-chou said: 'What are you here for?' Yun-men said: 'I have not yet illuminated my own affair. I beg you to instruct me, Master.' Mu-chou opened the door, took one look at him, and then closed it again."

This was Mu-chou's way of teaching Yun-men. It is full of meaning.

"This same thing happened as Yun-men knocked on the door day after day for three days. On the third day, Mu-chou opened the door, and as Yun-men was about to come in, Mu-chou grabbed him and said, 'Speak! Speak!' Yun-men hesitated, and so Mu-chou pushed him out saying, 'You antique drill!' Then he shut the door."

This time when the door was opened, Yun-men had stuck his foot inside, but Mu-chou didn't care whether it was a foot or a hand: he slammed the door right on Yun-men's foot, hurting him. This is a Zen teaching method. It is really more than we can bear. If this happened to a modern person, it would be surprising if he did not take Mu-chou to court. "You antique drill!" means something like "You old fogey!" At these words, Yun-men was enlightened. "By having his foot injured, Yun-men awakened." This is the story of the circumstances of Yun-men's enlightenment.

This was certainly not as comfortable as the way Ling-yun was enlightened by seeing peach blossoms! There was a similar case to Ling-yun's of a nun who was also enlightened in this manner:

> She returned with the scent
> of plum blossoms on her hands
> Spring was already a hundred percent present
> on the branch tips.

That was even more quiet and tasteful. But it was not this way for Yun-men—he was enlightened after Mu-chou slammed the door on his foot.

We must pay attention to the fact that even though the story above seems very simple, in fact Yun-men had done more than ten years of meditation work after leaving home as a young man, and he had mastered the Vinaya School theoretically and experientially. Of course he had studied Buddhism in depth, and learned about consciousness-only and transcendental wisdom. He could expound all of them at an even higher level, but it was useless—he still could not pacify his mind. When situations arose, he could not use what he knew. Thus, he had not yet illuminated his own affair and this is what Yun-men was looking for. This is why he traveled to see Mu-chou.

So you must remember that this record of the circumstances of Yun-men's enlightenment is comparatively simplified. If the whole course of his ten years and more of cultivating practices were recorded, it would make a great reference book for later day people. But the ancients felt that recording their own affairs was a bit like advertising themselves, so they did not do it. Modern day people think differently on this, but the real problem is that they read these ancient stories and feel everything is so easy. They miss the emphasis on practice and believe all this talk about enlightenment is purely a minor psychological clearing, which can happen if you are lucky enough to see a pretty peach blossom.

Later Yun-men went to Ling-shu, a temple in Kiangsi province. "This was in mysterious harmony with a prediction previously made by Chih-sheng concerning receiving a head monk." Chih-sheng was a former abbot of this temple, and he had previously predicted that in the future the abbot here would be a man who had attained the Path. "Earlier, Chih-sheng had been at Ling-shu for twenty years without appointing a head monk." According to the regulations for the Zen monasteries, the leader at the level below the teaching master was called the head monk. But Chih-sheng had never appointed a head monk.

When his disciples asked him: "Master, how about appointing a head monk?" Chih-sheng said: "My head monk has just been born." A few years went by and he told them: "My head monk has grown up, and now he is tending oxen." Another few years passed and he said: "My head monk has left home to become a monk, and now he is traveling around on foot visiting teachers." Later he said: "Aha! He has awakened to the Path!" One day Chih-sheng ordered his disciples to ring the bells and open the temple gate, telling them: "My head monk is about to arrive."

Everyone went out to look: Yun-men had just arrived on foot. He had come to this temple to stay awhile. As soon as the old master Chih-sheng saw him, he said: "I've been expecting you for a long time." He immediately invited Yun-men to take the position of head monk. In the major Zen temples of the past, appointing a head monk was equivalent to modern day governments appointing cabinet ministers. It was an extremely serious matter.

This temple was in the southern part of Kiangsi province, near Kuangtung province. In the late T'ang and Five Dynasties period, local warlords had divided up the country. "Liu, the Lord of Kuang" was the military chief of Kuangtung and Kiangsi: he was a well-known, cruel warlord. Liu's full name is not recorded, because even though men like him were local lords in their areas, they were not reckoned to be men of importance by the compilers of the historical records. However, in those days the great teaching masters of the Zen monasteries were all invited to court by governments as they were considered worthies.

This man Liu, the Lord of Kuang, was making preparations for a rebellion against the central government, so he came specially to see Master Chih-sheng "to ask him to evaluate his plan." He intended to ask Master Chih-sheng whether or not it would be a good idea to launch the rebellion. Before he arrived at Ling-shu, Chih-sheng already knew he was coming. He waited until the Lord of Kuang arrived, then he sat cross-legged and died. It was equivalent to giving him his answer: "If you rebel, you will end up the same as me, you will die."

The Lord of Kuang asked the monks who were present: "When did your master get sick?" "He hadn't been sick. Just before you arrived, Your Majesty, he gave us a letter and he told us to deliver it to you." The Lord of Kuang opened the letter and read it. It said: "The eye of humans and devas is the head monk in the hall." He was nominating Yun-men to take charge of the temple. The Lord of Kuang understood completely: he "demobilized his soldiers" and did not launch the rebellion. At the same time, he appointed Yun-men as the teaching master at Ling-shu Temple.

Now let's turn our attention away from these lively stories themselves, and use what they teach us to discover how to work diligently on the Dharma Gate of the mind-ground.

Here's an example of Yun-men's teaching methods. When he opened the teaching hall at Ling-shu, that is, gave his first talk in his capacity of abbot, he said to the assembly: "What are all of you

seeking, that you have come here for no reason? All I can do is eat and shit: what else do I know how to do? You have traveled all over on foot, studying Zen and asking about the Path. So now I ask you: 'What is it that they study in all those places? Try to bring it up so we can see.'"

This is a record of the contemporary vernacular language. There were four or five hundred people in Yun-men's audience. "At this point, he had no alternative, so he recited a verse by San-p'ing."

San-p'ing was a disciple of Master Ta-tien. Ta-tien was in Kuang-chou; he was a disciple of Ma-tsu, and a famous Zen master. San-p'ing was Master Ta-tien's head monk. After the famous Confucian Han Yu was demoted and sent to Ch'ao-cho, Han Yu and Ta-tien were good friends. Every day Han Yu asked him about the Buddhist Path, but Ta-tien would never explain it to him.

One time Han Yu asked Master Ta-tien: "My official duties are many and complicated. Please say something concise about the essence of the Buddha Dharma." Han Yu was asking Master Ta-tien to instruct him in the Buddha Dharma. "Ta-tien was silent for a long time, and Han Yu did not know what to do. Han Yu said: 'Master, I still do not understand.' San-p'ing, who was a bystander to this scene, then knocked three times on the meditation bench. Ta-tien said: 'Why did you do that?' San-p'ing said: 'First this truth is activated with concentration, then it is brought forth with wisdom.'"

Han Yu said in effect: I understand. But why didn't you tell me this, Master? Why instead did I understand from what your assistant said? When the old master heard this, he took a cudgel and beat San-p'ing. Why did he beat him? Because explaining the truth to Han Yu had harmed him. To teach and guide Han Yu in a genuine sense it was necessary to block off all theoretical principles. For learned people full of thoughts it is not easy to enter the Path, because it is very easy for them to take the principles and make explanatory footnotes. San-p'ing told him these two lines and Han Yu thought he understood, but in fact he was still not correct.

Later on San-p'ing became a major Zen teacher. He wrote an enlightenment verse that is very excellent, so Yun-men borrowed it and put it to use in his opening talk to the assembly although the two of them lived several decades apart.

Zen master Yun-men borrowed San-p'ing's verse and said: "This very seeing and hearing is not seeing and hearing." After reciting this line, Yun-men looked around and saw that no one understood, so

he continued with the next line of the verse: "There is no other sound and form to offer to you." After this he looked again at the assembly of monks, and they still did not understand, so he himself added: "Hey! What lip-service 'sound and form' is this?" Then he recited the third line: "If you comprehend completely that in this there is nothing at all. . ." He looked around again, and still no one understood, so he said: "What thing is there?" Then he recited San-p'ing's fourth line: "There's no harm whether you distinguish the essence and the function or not." Everyone still did not understand, so he again added a footnote: "Words are the essence, the essence is words." Then he held up his staff and said: "The staff is the essence, the lamp is the function: are they separate or not?" He paused for a moment, but no one answered. Then Yun-men said: "Don't tell me that you do not know. Omniscience is pure and clear. Do you understand or not?" Such is the teaching method of the Zen School.

On a similar note, one time I was in town with a student and we saw a couple of young lovers walking down the street hugging each other. The student asked me how I felt about this. I said:

This very seeing and hearing
    is not seeing and hearing
There is no other sound and form to offer to you
If you comprehend completely that in this
    there is nothing at all
There's no harm whether you distinguish the
    essence and the function or not.

This incident of the young lovers poses the same principle. This is not a joke but it is something that is not easy for people to understand.

The Record of Pointing at the Moon says: "Yun-men said: 'Where the light does not penetrate through, there are two kinds of sickness. One is when all places are not illuminated, and there are things in front of you.'"

When we sit in meditation and study Zen, if the light of wisdom, the light of inherent true nature does not come, it is because of two problems. One is that everywhere before your eyes there are things, and these obstruct you, and you do not realize it: thus, there is no way for you to illuminate mind and see true nature.

When we are sitting in meditation, is it true or not that there are things before us? When you close your eyes, it is all dark, and

you cannot see. When you open your eyes, all seeing and hearing *is* seeing and hearing, and there are indeed sounds and forms right there to offer you. Once you open your eyes, you are dragged off by externals, and you cannot accomplish what the verse says:

> If you comprehend completely
> that in this there is nothing at all
> There's no harm whether you distinguish
> the essence and the function or not.

When you close your eyes, your eyelids block them, and everything is dark, a uniform lack of illumination. Knowing this, the Zen masters scolded people by calling them "tubs of black lacquer." Our bodies are like tubs, and in the tub it is totally black: how can this work? "All places are not illuminated, and there are things in front of you." This is the first problem.

Only when you can truly empty yourself of your concept of the body will the light of the mind of transcendental wisdom be able to come forth. Only then can you say, "There's no harm whether you distinguish the essence and the function or not." Then you can also say there's no harm whether or not you separate internal and external. This is the first point. It is very precise, unlike the style in which he expounded the Dharma above.

The second sickness Yun-men described like this: "When you have penetrated through to the emptiness of all things, it seems there is still something there, half hidden. This too is the light not penetrating through."

Pay attention here. Sometimes in regard to theory you have awakened a little bit, and when you sit in meditation, it is comparatively empty, but of course you have not yet fully penetrated through to the emptiness of all things, and there is a little bit of a shadow. But take note of what Yun-men said: you are sitting there, more or less empty, but there seems to be something there half hidden. If you call it false thought, this is not right, but there still is something there. You should not think you have it right: you are not able to finish with birth and death.

Yun-men explains very clearly. You have penetrated through to the emptiness of all things: you have reached the inner truth, and you have the experiential state. But in your *samadhi*, it seems there is something there half hidden blocking you. Later on, we'll encounter another story of this very problem. It means that the light of the mind of *prajna* has not penetrated through. Penetrate through means penetrate through and be liberated. So-called penetration means there is no internal or external, and no barriers, and you are liberated.

Yun-men has given us a very precise account of seeing truth, cultivating practice, and carrying out vows. So we must pay close attention to all he says.

Yun-men also said: "There are also two sicknesses of the *dharmakaya*." Pure, unborn, with not a single thought arising—this is the *dharmakaya*. There are also two sicknesses associated with it. "When you have attained the *dharmakaya*, and you settle down in it because you have not forgotten your clinging to the Dharma, and your view of self still remains, this is one sickness."

To explain, when you reach the realm of emptiness a little bit, and it becomes pure and clean, this can only be called a semblance of the *dharmakaya* or being close to the *dharmakaya*. But when you depart from this pure realm, you don't have anything, so you cling tightly to it: this is clinging to the Dharma. Once clinging to the Dharma is present, then there is the view of the self there: this is "your view of self still remains." So there's no need to talk about "phenomena have no self"; you have not even emptied out to the point that "people have no self." The sickness is to stay in the realm of the *dharmakaya*. If you hold to this purity and think it is the ultimate, this becomes a great sickness. This is one of the sicknesses of the *dharmakaya*.

The second sickness of the *dharmakaya* Yun-men describes like this: "Even if you have penetrated through the *dharmakaya*, you should not let go. Make a detailed investigation: if there is any breath, this too is a sickness." When you have truly reached the realm of absolute purity and emptiness, when you have truly arrived at the point where you are in the realm of emptiness at all times wherever you are, you are still making a mistake. This mistake is that if you do not hold to the realm of emptiness, if you do not concentrate on it for one moment, it ends. The *dharmakaya* is not there anymore, and this realm of emptiness runs away.

In the audience there are several old friends. They all have had a bit if attainment from their studies: they have all worked very hard, and exerted themselves in seven day intensive meditation sessions. Pressing the point, they have a bit of purity, and they feel entirely correct, and they have awakened to the true principle. But they "should not let go." If they relax a bit, if they mix in with worldly

affairs, if they get busy with things, then all of this is gone. They should reflect back carefully: What use is this? Is there any breath here? This, too, is a great sickness.

When we read the recorded sayings of the Zen School, we always gloss over crucial points like this. In reality, these are all precious teachings. However, we just notice anecdotes with curiosity value like one Zen master twisting his disciple's nose or another Zen master becoming enlightened when seeing peach blossoms. We read these again and again without being able to awaken to the Path. The material I was just talking about—these are the important points.

"Yun-men imparted these words: 'There is a light in each and every person, but when they look for it, it does not appear, and they are plunged into darkness.'" When you want to look for the Path, the more you look the more you cannot see it. After a few moments, Yun-men asked everyone: "What is the light in all people?" No one understood, and no one could answer, so Yun-men himself answered on their behalf: "The kitchen, the storehouse, and the monastery gate." Yun-men looked around again, but no one made a sound. So then he said: "A good thing is not as good as nothing." Then he left the teacher's seat and went back to his quarters.

This is the teaching method of the Zen School, the method used in the Zen halls so let us talk more about the teaching methods Yun-men used on people so we can arrive at a bit of understanding. One time when Yun-men had come to Chiang-chou, State Minister Ch'en invited him to a vegetarian feast. A state minister at this time was comparable to a modern day head of a government department; the rank was very high. Now the minister wanted to test Yun-men, so as soon as he met him he asked: "I do not ask about the Confucian books, and for the scriptural teachings of Buddhism there are lecturers. What is the business of patchrobed Zen monks traveling on foot?"

This State Minister Ch'en had made a thorough study of Buddhism, and he understood Zen, too. As soon as he saw Yun-men he asked him this: "I will not ask you about the Confucian books—they are worldly learning. As for the Buddhist canon, that is the business of the teachers who study Buddhism, and I'll let the Dharma teachers who lecture on the sutras take care of that. All I am asking you is this: you people who study Zen want to illuminate mind and see true nature, so you go everywhere to study. What is your view of this practice?"

State Minister Ch'en was the host, but as soon as his guest arrived and they met, without any show of courtesy, he immediately posed a testing question to Yun-men.

Yun-men then asked him, "How many people have you asked this question of yours?" to which state Minister Ch'en replied, "Right now I am asking you."

Yun-men then said, "Leaving this aside right now for a moment, what is the meaning of the scriptural teachings?" In other words: I will not answer this question you are asking me now, but I ask you, what is being talked about in all the scriptures in the Buddhist canon?

The State Minister replied: "Yellow scrolls and red rollers." That is to say: they mean nothing at all, they are just beautifully decorated books.

Yun-men continued: "That is just the written words. What is the meaning of the scriptural teachings?"

State Minister Ch'en then pressed Yun-men a step further and came out with an expert specialist's statement: "When the mouth wishes to speak of it, words fail. When the mind wishes to link up to it, thoughts are forgotten." The meaning is that there are no words that can express the real Buddha Dharma. Listening to him, this great State Minister seems to be enlightened.

However, when Yun-men heard him say this, he said: "'When the mouth wishes to speak of it, words fail'—this pertains to language. 'When the mind wishes to link up to it, thoughts are forgotten'—this pertains to false thoughts. What is the meaning of the scriptural teachings?"

The statements of State Minister Ch'en are relative statements. Those who have studied Yogacara know that the first statement pertains to language and the second statement to false thoughts, and these are relative statements. Yun-men's response was therefore in effect saying: "You still are not answering my question. I ask you: what is the meaning of the scriptural teachings? Ultimately, what are the Buddhist sutras talking about?" "State Minister Ch'en said nothing." Since the State Minister said nothing, it seemed that it would be very awkward to proceed with this vegetarian meal.

Yun-men went on and asked him: "I have heard that you have studied *The Lotus Sutra*. Is this true?" "Indeed it is!" replied State Minister Ch'en. Yun-men went on: "In the sutra it says: 'All forms of livelihood do not go against absolute reality.' " This is what Buddha said. Householders and home-leavers alike are capable of achieving

enlightenment. For people who are householders traveling the bodhisattva path, there is no duality between all forms of livelihood and the essence of the Path.

Yun-men then asked: "Tell me, how many people withdraw from the heaven that is not not-thought?" In other words, in the Buddhist worldview, beyond the realm of form there is the heaven that is not not-thought. Yun-men was asking how many of the *devas* in this heaven voluntarily withdraw from that position? By implication he was asking: Given that worldly dharmas and the Buddha Dharma do not contradict each other, why sit there meditating with your eyes closed like a corpse? Why do you want to seek the state where your mind does not move? How many people are willing to descend from the heaven that is not not-thought into the world of ordinary people? Who among those who have attained a lofty position is willing to step down from it?

Having pressed the State Minister to the point that he could not reply, Yun-men then gave him words of instruction: "Do not be careless, State Minister." In other words, the Buddha Dharma is not that simple, don't think you are so brilliant.

Yun-men then continued: "Advanced monks abandon the Buddhist scriptures and philosophical treatises, and deliberately enter the Zen community. After ten or twenty years, they still cannot do anything. How can you, a state minister, understand?"

Yun-men is saying: Among monks there are many who make noise explaining Buddhism. They think they are not getting enlightened, and so they do not study Buddhism anymore. They discard the principles of the scriptural teachings, and run off to the Zen halls to study Zen. They study Zen for ten or twenty years without even a shadow of enlightenment. There are many many like this! State Minister, do not think you are already enlightened, you still have a long way to go!

The old master Yun-men was very fierce. This rebuke made the State Minister kneel down and say: "I am at fault, I am at fault." Thus he finally submitted.

So at the start of this lecture we pointed out the importance of cultivation practice, as opposed to a worldly discussion on meditation cases. And in this story, we also find the rebuke from our ancestors that discussions and intellectual knowledge are not enough. Don't think that with a little smattering of insight you know everything. Only the actual practice of cultivation will enable you to comprehend the great affair.

2

CORRECTING YOUR MIND, BODY, AND BEHAVIOR

When the teachers of the Zen School talk about seeing truth, cultivating realization, and carrying out vows, most of the time they use veiled language. Thus, we must not be deceived by the beauty and subtlety of the language.

The teaching of the Yun-men School was very difficult, so the talented people produced by the Yun-men School were all quite extraordinary. However, because it was very difficult the school produced very few people. This is because Yun-men's viewpoint was lofty and his teaching methods were strict.

Yun-men's teaching methods were termed looking, reflecting, and sighing. He did not use the vernacular we are using and speak directly of seeing truth, cultivating realization, and carrying out vows, but his content was the same.

What exactly do looking, reflecting, and sighing mean? For example, when a student came to see him, Yun-men would open his eyes wide and stare straight at him and say: "Do you see clearly?" If the student did not understand what he meant, Yun-men would give a sigh of regret.

When modern day people study Zen, they take Yun-men's looking, reflecting, and sighing as meditation cases to study. If you study them however, do you think you will be able to awaken to the Path? Not necessarily!

Yun-men had the air of a king, and his teaching methods were very strict and formal, especially because he had come out of the Vinaya School. He was very rigorous in his demands for discipline from his disciples. He was always reminding his students to work hard. If it so happened that some students were taking a walk and they bumped into Yun-men, he would call out, "Look!" When the students turned around to look at him, and they did not understand, Yun-men would give a sigh. The sound of this sigh is definitely not one of the six forms of breath named in Chih-i's T'ien-t'ai treatise, *The Lesser Cessation and Contemplation*, so do not regard it as some kind of breath-work. That would be wrong.

Now let's turn to the Fa-yen School of Zen. The Fa-yen School declined in the Southern Sung era (1126-1279) of Chinese history. This school's teaching methods differed from the Yun-men School, and it put comparatively more emphasis on literary studies. The talented people of this school were all therefore highly cultivated in literary studies. An example is Zen master Yen-shou of Yung-ming, the author of *The Source Mirror*, who belonged to the Fa-yen line. Because Master Fa-yen emphasized literary style and the principles of the teachings, he produced a man like Yen-shou, who excelled in both the principles of the teaching and in the cultivation of practice. All of you can study for yourselves the story of Fa-yen's enlightenment (in volume 22 of *The Record of Pointing at the Moon*). Zen master Fa-yen composed this famous verse:

At the pinnacle of truth,
    I forget sentiments and verbal expression
How could there be any metaphors
    that can match it?
The moonlight on a frosty night reaches everywhere
It falls as it pleases on the mountain streams
The fruit is ripe and heavy with monkeys
The mountains go on forever, and it seems I've
    lost my way
As I raise my head, some remnants of illumination
    remain
Actually I am west of where I live.

This poem cannot be judged to be written especially well in Chinese, but it still expresses the realm of Zen. In it, Fa-yen proposes that seeing truth, cultivating realization, and carrying out vows must all be given equal weight. First, we must fully fathom truth. When the illumination of truth reaches its highest point, the road of words is cut off, and mental activity comes to an end. There are no more false thoughts and this is "forgetting sentiments." The first principle of Buddhist work is that you must penetrate through to the truth and succeed at this. Only after that can your meditation work succeed.

When you reach this point where the road of words is cut off and mental activity comes to an end, there are no comparisons or metaphors that can be uttered. All comparisons and metaphors are wrong, because there is no way to compare this state to anything else.

"The moonlight on a frosty night reaches everywhere / It falls as it pleases on the mountain streams." This refers to the realm that is present before the author. People who are living in the mountains often see this very scene. The winter moonlight is especially beautiful, the mountains are covered with deep snow, there is no trace of people. The moon is suspended there perfectly round in the sky, and down below is a crystalline world. At this time, as Buddha said when he was enlightened: "In Heaven and on Earth I alone am the honored one." The wonder of it all is indescribable. "The moonlight on a frosty night reaches everywhere" refers to this realm: a single expanse of pure illumination, where the body is forgotten, and thoughts are forgotten, and self and others and the world are all forgotten.

You must pay attention to the second line: "It falls as it pleases on the mountain streams." Sometimes (in our meditation work, through chance insights) we are like blind cats luckily bumping into dead rats: there is no great experiential realm, but we just have a little bit of emptiness, by chance a bit of Zen in there, but a minute later we have lost it. There are many people like this. It's that they do not understand that "The moonlight on a frosty night reaches everywhere / It falls as it pleases on the mountain streams." They do not understand that when illumination reaches its zenith, darkness is born, and that this is how it must be. How can we say it is lost? When darkness peaks, it also can give rise to illumination. These oscillations are due to not having penetrated through to the truth.

The next two lines are good poetry, and describe a real realm of experience: "The fruit is ripe and heavy with monkeys. The mountains go on forever, and it seems I've lost my way." When the fruit is ripe, the monkeys come to pick it. They hold it in their arms, but they cannot carry it away. The image of monkeys stealing fruit is very meaningful. With his right hand, a monkey picks a piece of fruit, and tucks it under his left arm, then he uses his left hand to pick another piece of fruit, and tucks it under his right arm. He goes on picking with both hands, and the fruit keeps dropping from under his arms onto the ground. He sees a human coming, and quickly runs off. This is human life. You grab that sum of money and put it in the bank, and take the money and buy stocks. Later on, when you depart from the world, both hands are empty, and you have nothing at all. You are exactly the same as the monkey picking fruit. There are some monkeys who are a little calmer: when they pick a piece of fruit, they hold it in both hands and eat it. But, if they want to steal all they can, they are sure to end up with nothing at all.

This section of the poem is entirely about meditation work. This is the realm in which *yang* is born when *yin* culminates, and *yin* is born when *yang* culminates, a realm that is always changing. Do not think that you can consistently maintain the realm of pure illumination where not a single thought is born. If you never changed, then you would be a monster, a monster called a heretical outsider. If we hold to a moment of mindfulness, after a long time we fall into dead-tree Zen, without the joy of life. In actual fact, it is sure to change. The Chinese Taoists call it "returning the elixir after nine transformations." Through a step-by-step process of transformation, you really reach the later stage where you attain the fruit of enlightenment. "The fruit is ripe and heavy with monkeys." Monkeys represent the conceptual mind. In this phase of meditation work, "The mountains go on forever and it seems I've lost my way." When the fruit is ripe, you must slowly cultivate it. We do three days of sitting meditation and we want to realize the fruit of enlightenment: there is no such possibility. We must proceed slowly. Sometimes we even have doubts, and it seems there is no hope. This is what the verse means when it says: "The mountains go on forever and it seems I've lost my way." All of this is talking about meditation work.

The last two lines of Master Fa-yen's verse describe a ready-made scene: "As I raise my head, some remnants of illumination remain / Actually I am west of where I live." He raises his head and looks, and it seems he is in the dark, and the light has faded away, but there is still a bit of illumination left. After all, that spiritual illumination is still there, and he is west of his house. "West of where I live" is an expression with a double meaning. It could also mean the realm of ultimate bliss in the West. This realm of ultimate bliss does not necessarily represent the Pure Land paradise in the West, the land of Amitabha Buddha: it represents the purity of inherent nature.

The Fa-yen School was quite genuine, but it put too much emphasis on the literary aspect, and compared to the other schools of Zen, stressed the written word. This poem above was recorded in *The Record of Pointing at the Moon*. Another classic Zen compendium, *Five Lamps Meeting at the Source*, volume 10, records yet another literary verse of the Master. Zen master Fa-yen was with Prince Li enjoying the peonies and having a conversation. Prince Li of the Five Dynasties period was the last of the line of descendants of Emperor T'ai-tsung of the T'ang Dynasty. Prince Li greatly respected Zen master Fa-yen, and was one of his disciples. One day the prince invited Fa-yen to

accompany him on an outing to view some peonies, and at the same time asked him about the Buddha Dharma. Peonies represent wealth and high rank. After they had finished viewing the flowers, Prince Li asked Fa-yen to compose a verse so Fa-yen wrote a poem on the spot:

Wrapped in a blanket, facing the fragrant thicket
The paths by which we came are not the same
From today my hair is white
The flowers are last year's red
The gorgeous beauty follows the morning dew
The rich fragrance chases the evening breeze
Why must we wait for the withering away
Before we realize emptiness?

The weather was cold. The two men stood facing the thicket of peonies with blankets draped across their shoulders. "The paths by which we came are not the same" means the roads the two men were following were different.

"From today my hair is white / The flowers are last year's red." These two lines are really excellent, but they are patterned after a verse by the T'ang dynasty master poet Tu Fu: "From this night on the dew is white / The moon is as bright as in my home village." Nevertheless, Fa-yen appropriated the pattern brilliantly.

"The gorgeous beauty follows the morning dew / The rich fragrance chases the evening breeze." This describes the flowers. Good poetry.

"Why must we wait for the withering away / Before we realize emptiness?" To this royal scion who was the last of his line, Fa-yen was saying: You better hurry up and cultivate the Path. Your era has already ended, and the present era does not belong to you anymore. Why do you have to wait until the flowers fall before you realize that they are empty? At this very moment you have just come to the good part, and soon things will be all over for you. How brilliantly these lines are written!

In *The Record of Pointing at the Moon*, volume 22, there is another verse by Fa-yen titled "The Triple World is Mind Only":

The triple world is only mind,
The myriad things are only consciousness.

Only mind, only consciousness,
Sounds in the eyes, forms in the ears.
Forms do not reach the ears,
Sounds do not touch the eyes.
Forms in the eyes, sounds in the ears,
The myriad things are accomplished.
The myriad things are not entangling objects:
How can you view them as illusions?
The earth, the mountains, the rivers:
Which one is solid, which one changes?

This is the Zen School of the Fa-yen line. Later the Fa-yen line developed further and notable adepts of the Fa-yen School in the Sung Dynasty included Zen master Yen-shou of Yung-ming and also Zen master Yuan of Fu-shan.

In addition to the two Zen Schools of Yun-men and Fa-yen, if we want to study the history of the development of Chinese culture, we must pay special attention to the ninety-six circular symbols of the Kuei-Yang School. Zen master Kuei-shan was a disciple of Zen master Pai-chang, and Zen master Yang-shan came out of Kuei-shan's line. Following from them came Lin-chi and Tung-shan and Ts'ao-shan. It was already the period of the later T'ang and the Five Dynasties. Yun-men and Fa-yen lived under the Five Dynasties whereas Fu-shan Yuan and Yung-ming Yen-shou lived under the Sung Dynasty. There was an interval of two or three centuries here. In a few sentences we have already covered several hundred years in an instant.

The more time went on, the more complicated the originally simple teaching methods of Zen became. It is the same with the methods of modern science—specialization gets more and more refined as time goes on. With Lin-chi came the four selections, the three mysteries and the three essentials. With Ts'ao-Tung Zen came the five positions of lord and minister. Yun-men's looking, reflecting, and sighing also came and went. With Fa-yen, Zen teaching developed into the method of the "nine belts." These nine belts, incidentally, became a part of East Asian culture and were transmitted to Japan, where they became technical terms in the area of the martial arts. This was a development of Zen master Yuan of Fu-shan's nine belts, which were nine categories.

Modern Zen is in a pitiful condition. The average person thinks that sitting meditation is Zen, that studying meditation sayings is Zen, that silent illumination is Zen. There is also the type who thinks that being engrossed in contemplative thought is Zen. In all, the situation has become very serious. The Sung Dynasty Zen master Ta-hui Tsung-kao called this "the misguided Zen of silent illumination."

Then there is another sort who lecture on Zen studies and say it is even easier than this. For instance, they speak of awakening to the Path by seeing peach blossoms. They explain enlightenment as seeing that mountains are not mountains and rivers are not rivers, then seeing that mountains are mountains and rivers are rivers. These are the kind of things that everyone likes to say best: the books they cook up on Zen are full of such things. When penniless people go shopping, generally they do not see what merchandise is displayed in the department stores. According to these phony lecturers, the penniless people see that the merchandise is not merchandise—isn't that Zen?

It did indeed happen that Zen master Ling-yun was enlightened upon seeing some peach blossoms. This story is very famous. But no one pays any attention to the fact that Ling-yun at that point had been studying Zen for twenty or thirty years already without penetrating through. One day, while he was relaxing from his efforts, he raised his head and looked up and saw some peach blossoms: "So! It's been this all along!" he realized, and he was enlightened. He wrote a verse:

For thirty years I've been seeking a swordsman
How many times the leaves have fallen and the
branches have sprouted!
After once seeing peach blossoms
Up till now I've had no more doubts.

This is the same as a verse written by a nun when she was enlightened:

All day long I sought spring without seeing spring
I wore out my straw sandals among the clouds on
the mountain ranges
Coming back with the scent of plum blossoms
on my hands

Spring was already complete
on the tips of the branches.

Zen master Ling-yun had already studied Zen for nearly thirty years; only then he could say, "After once seeing peach blossoms / Up till now I've had no more doubts." This is the same as the Venerable Kashyapa. Shakyamuni held up the flower, and Kashyapa smiled: Ultimately, what did he awaken to? Why didn't the man who planted the peach blossoms awaken to the Path during his whole life? These are questions, meditation points.

If we insist on awakening to the Path by seeing peach blossoms, then the Sixth Dalai Lama must have been enlightened, too, in order to have written this love poem:

That beauty was not born from a mother's womb
She must have grown from a peach blossom tree
I regret how easily peach blossoms fall
I have more feeling for the fallen flowers
than you.

If people focus on these pieces of literature, they will never in their lives understand clearly. They will go mad, and become crazy people. Be careful in this.

Zen master Ling-yun was enlightened when he saw the peach blossoms. Shakyamuni Buddha was enlightened when he saw the morning star. This is one and the same principle. When Zen master Hsu-yun was enlightened by breaking a tea cup, it was all the same principle. But can we really do this?

Ling-yun had spent thirty years searching, without being able to find it. For him it was no longer a matter of the three channels and the seven chakras or the special meridians and the eight channels. One day he suddenly let up, and got up from his meditation seat, intending to relax a bit. He looked at the flowers: the flowers were still flowers, and he was still himself. When his eyes looked at the flowers, his thoughts were already not on the flowers anymore. His vision turned around, he looked without seeing: there were no flowers in his eyes, and no flowers in his mind. At this time he was in the midst of making intense efforts, his mind was very tense. He lifted his head and saw this thing, his eyes were facing it, when suddenly he

turned his awareness around, and his thoughts suddenly emptied out totally. It was just like this, there was nothing rare or special. How could it have been only by seeing peach blossoms that he would have awakened? It would have been the same whatever he had seen.

I have a method that you can try out for yourselves. Go run several laps, and when you have finished, as soon as you have stopped and are standing there, before you've caught your breath, just have someone pat you on the back and say to you: "Good, you're already home, you've made it." At that time you will surely think you have become enlightened. Your mind will feel very solid, and you will have the feeling of having become enlightened. This is a psychological state that can deceive people, which many of you may have encountered.

This kind of spurious "Zen" has become very prevalent in later generations. You must not be confused: this is not real Zen. Because of this, Zen master Hsueh-tou wrote a verse that said:

Broken down Yun-men sailing his iron boat
South of the river, north of the river, people
vying to look
Too bad so many of the people who go fishing
Tumble down after him into the vast darkness
and lose their fishing poles.

This points out that so many of the people in later generations who study Zen, ourselves included, are right now in this realm, following him into the vast darkness and losing their fishing poles. South of the river and north of the river, the people everywhere all want to board this boat: this is like us seeking for teachers everywhere and delving into everything. But don't say that the students do not succeed in their studies. Look at those who claim to be teachers and want to go fishing: see if they have caught any big fish or not. The final outcome is that they lose even their own fishing poles. As the saying goes, "Their original intention was to save sentient beings, but instead they were saved by sentient beings."

What is the difference between the way the people in ancient times studied Buddhism and the way people of later generations study it? Buddha certainly did not say that illuminating mind and seeing true nature is Zen. The idea that finishing with birth and death

is Zen, and that illuminating mind and seeing true nature is Zen, was something expounded by the Chinese Zen Schools after the Sung and Yuan Dynasties.

Through the ages very few people have penetrated the meaning of Buddha holding up the flower on Spirit Peak and Kashyapa responding with a slight smile. I always teach people to study this meditation case. Why did Buddha hold up the flower? Why did the Venerable Kashyapa give a slight smile? In this are included all three essentials: seeing truth, cultivating realization, and carrying out vows. It is not as simple as just seeing a flower.

To penetrate this matter, let us talk some more about what Buddha said when he transmitted the Mind-Dharma of the Zen School. Buddha said: "I have the treasury of the eye of the Correct Dharma, the wondrous mind of nirvana, the formless reality, the subtle Dharma Gate, the special transmission beyond the scriptural teachings which does not establish any verbal formulas: this I entrust to Mahakashyapa." Buddha did *not* say: "I have the Dharma Gate of directly pointing to the human mind, of illuminating mind and seeing true nature, and I entrust it to Kashyapa." This was a change made by later generations. Though the meaning is not very different, the words have been changed, and the concept is entirely different. If illuminating mind and seeing true nature is Zen, what is mind? There is a question here. This is the first error, and it is very serious.

The second point is this. From when the First Patriarch Bodhidharma came to China, up until the time before the Sixth Patriarch, when the Zen patriarchs directly pointed to the human mind, to enable people to illuminate mind and see true nature, how did they do this pointing? It certainly wasn't the method of pointing to mind used after the Sixth Patriarch.

Even with the kind of learning the Second Patriarch had, and the level of cultivating practice he had, at the end he still could not pacify his mind, and he had to seek a method of pacifying mind. Surely it doesn't mean that the Second Patriarch was so without promise. With his learning, and his level of cultivation, he should have pacified his mind already. Since, like us, he looked upon people and the world and everything else as empty, how was it that he had not yet pacified his mind? After he had attained the Dharma, and passed it on to the Third Patriarch, when he went to the brothel districts to play, he said that he was still tempering his mind. What was the reason for this? Don't tell me that he didn't understand the principles that even we understand.

The third point is this. When the Third Patriarch came to see the Second Patriarch, his whole body was sick. He was suffering from what in ancient times were called "wind sicknesses"—what in modern times are called high blood pressure, nervous disorders, and arthritis. His whole body was sick. He asked the Second Patriarch to help him repent his wrongdoings. The Second Patriarch said to him: "Bring your wrongdoings here and I will do repentance for you." He wanted him to search out his wrongdoings, and then he would offer repentance for him. In response to this statement by the Second Patriarch, the Third Patriarch paused a few moments, and according to the classic account: "After a long silence said: 'When I search for my wrongdoings, they cannot be found.' The Second Patriarch said: 'I have completed the repentance for you.'" At this the Third Patriarch was enlightened. Later on his sicknesses were cured.

This is by no means nothing more than an ordinary case of a moment of emptiness in the mind. Sickness is produced by karma, and karma is created by the mind. In effect the Second Patriarch told him: "If you empty your mind, you will have no sickness." Later on the sicknesses that afflicted the whole body of the Third Patriarch were cured. What did he awaken to with this enlightenment? What he awakened to is the mind that is the one source of mind and material things. If on the basis of the conscious mind alone you say, "Aha! My mind is very pure, I am liberated!" What are you liberated from? In fact you cannot be liberated. Here in this story, it is worth paying attention to the fact that the Third Patriarch's sicknesses were actually cured by this awakening. He reached the source of material things.

When the Fourth Patriarch came to see the Third Patriarch, it was similar to the case of the Second Patriarch seeing Bodhidharma. At the time, the Fourth Patriarch was very young, only 14 years old. "He came and bowed to the Third Patriarch and said: 'I hope you will be compassionate, Master. I beg you to give me a method of liberation.' As soon as he heard this, the Third Patriarch turned around and asked him: 'Who is binding you?' " In other words: ultimately, who is tying you down? "The Fourth Patriarch mulled this over for a moment and said: 'No one is tying me down!' At this point the Third Patriarch said: 'Then why are you still seeking liberation?'" In other words: Then why do you still need to seek for some sort of liberation? In this way the Fourth Patriarch, who was so young, was enlightened.

What happened when the Fifth Patriarch met the Fourth Patriarch is even stranger. The Fourth Patriarch had been unable to pass along what had been handed down from Bodhidharma. One

day an old forester, a Taoist elder who had lived on the mountain a long time, came looking for the Fourth Patriarch, seeking the Path. The Fourth Patriarch said: You are too old. If you can switch bodies, I will wait for you. This old Taoist then deliberately caused himself to be reincarnated as an embryo in a woman's womb. If you say he was not enlightened, then how do you account for the fact that he could be reborn when he wanted to and exchange bodies? Though he had this ability, nevertheless, he was still not enlightened. The Fourth Patriarch really did wait for him. You must pay attention to this as a meditation case, too.

In later generations, once Zen people began saying that mind itself is buddha, they discussed mind everywhere. This very common method was certainly in wide circulation all over South China. But there were very great abuses of this method. When people in later generations did their utmost to stuff their minds with a meditation saying, this was even more mistaken.

One of the teaching methods of the Zen School was called "surrounding and attacking." This is the principle that the gate of nothingness is the gate to the Dharma. In this method, any one of the student's eighty-eight bonds and compulsions can be surrounded and attacked. With temperamental students, the teacher provokes a big outburst. With students who have heavy cravings, the teacher stirs up one of their major ones.

Here is an example of this technique. An important official came to see Zen master Yao-shan. He asked Yao-shan: "In the scriptures it says: 'The black wind blew him down into the land of the *rakshasas*, the malignant demons.' What does this mean?" This man was quite learned, and his official rank was high, and moreover when he asked the question he was very polite and proper. But the old master Yao-shan put a scornful expression on his face and replied: "Whoever you are, are you worthy to ask this question?" This really infuriated the man. Being so advanced in years, and so high in rank, and having asked his question so politely, when the teacher nevertheless gave him such a discourteous reply, how he longed to slap him! At this moment the old master Yao-shan gently touched him and said: "This is what 'The black wind blew him down into the land of the malignant demons' means." The official was awakened, and immediately fell to his knees in homage.

This is how subtle and wondrous the teaching methods of the Zen School are. The Zen master knows you are hot tempered, so he

deliberately thinks of a way to provoke you. When you lose your temper, then he mollifies you, telling you not to get angry, this is ignorance, ignorance is just the way you are behaving now. At this point the person awakens, and his mind is pure and clear.

Cravings, anger, ignorance, arrogance, doubt, and so on: these the Zen masters surround and attack, using all sorts of methods. There is no rigidly fixed method, but they must succeed in attacking our bonds and compulsions. It is like when Ling-yun awakened when seeing peach blossoms. After the teacher exposes us we say: Right, right, that's it exactly!

However, if you think that the momentary purity that this method of attacking and surrounding produces *is* Zen, then you are just deceiving yourself and deceiving others. This is just an experiential realm where the sixth consciousness happens to be pure and clean. It is the same as using the sounding board to make an impact on a person: one shot and he empties out, and his consciousness becomes pure and clear. He had just recognized this experiential realm. If he thinks that this is "mind," this is a great error, an egregious error. It is not.

The popularity of the saying "illuminating mind and seeing true nature" came after the Sixth Patriarch. As Zen evolved from generation to generation, the more time went on, the less real Zen there was. The state of affairs came to pass like the one we have now: many devotees of Zen think that it is unnecessary to work on the Buddha Dharma, that anyone at all can achieve enlightenment, that all you have to do is empty out for a moment.

If you want to purify your mind and thoughts one time, there are many, many methods for this. For example, you can look straight ahead, and place in front of you a luminous pearl, or an image of a buddha or a bodhisattva, and stare at it. Your mind and thoughts will slowly become pure and clear. Hypnotic techniques will also do this. But don't think these are Zen.

The method of surrounding and attacking is also found among the cultivation methods of Esoteric Buddhism. When you are about to lose your temper, they lock you in a pure and clean room and give you several days in there to vent your anger to its full extent, to vent it until you become tired, and your anger spontaneously disappears. With people full of cravings, they find a place that arouses your cravings, and when you have craved enough, then you have no more craving, and you are totally emptied out. The method of observing lights is the same principle.

But all these methods cannot be separated from the body, they cannot be separated from the realm of the skandha of form. No matter what religion you study, when you become aware of the realm of purity, the body is still present. When the *ch'i* channels are properly attuned, and the physical body is at peace, and the consciousness happens to be pure and clear, anyone can mistake this for enlightenment. In actual fact, this is inseparable from the physiological functioning of the body.

All of you should investigate this for yourselves. At this point, if you have a cold, or a more serious illness, you still can feel afflictions and suffer pain: you clearly realize that the mind of the Path is empty, but you cannot empty out. Some people have a bit more ability. When they are lying in the hospital, you ask them, "Right now, are you lucid?" They answer, "Yes I am." If you ask, "Are you in pain?", they can answer, "I feel bad."

A few days go by and the illness might get more serious. If you then ask them, "Can you understand?", they say, "I don't know." If you ask, "Are you doing any meditation work?", they will say, "Not anymore." Obviously everything is a matter of physiological functioning. What use is this purely mental awakening? And where is the so-called meditation work? In other words, without the help of the body, this meditation work of yours cannot succeed.

Everyone always talks casually about *ch'i* channels. *Ch'i* channels are something very natural. When a person concentrates and stabilizes, the *ch'i* channels always respond. Even when we are sleeping, there are always *ch'i* channels operating. These arise from the natural reaction of earth, water, fire, and wind in the body. However, when average people engage in quiet sitting, they have a terrible state of mind. On one hand, they are engaged in sitting meditation, while on the other hand they are thinking of becoming a buddha and becoming enlightened. The Zen School calls this [the state where] "the dishonest mind has not died." You are still craving advantages, hoping to steal some undeserved stroke of luck. People have many bad states of mind, and many ways to play games with their intelligence: all these are the dishonest mind.

If you have the dishonest mind, then you have a goal you are seeking. The various kinds of natural physiological manifestations correspond to mistaken psychological concepts. Thus when you think that this is purity, that this is enlightenment, you are always

playing around here in these. Ultimately, what do you call this? What is illuminating mind and seeing true nature? Fundamentally, you have not seen this, and so none of you do a good job in your study of Buddhism.

Now let's look at the chart of the Three Realms to understand this further. See page 34. The sequence of the three realms of Buddhism, which segments the universe into different worlds, also corresponds to our bodies: the lower part corresponds to the realm of desire, the middle part to the realm of form, and the upper part to the formless realm. According to the theory of the Chinese Taoists, in the lower part we refine *ching* vitality into *ch'i* energy, in the middle part we refine *ch'i* energy into *shen* spirit, and in the upper part we refine *shen* spirit and return it to *hsu* emptiness, and attain the realm of emptiness.

What are the so-called *ch'i* channels? Buddhists speak of the four elements, that is, earth, water, fire, and air. When we do meditation work, there are also the four *dhyanas*, four realms of concentration. No matter whether for *prajna* or for true thusness, enlightened people must travel the path of *dhyana*. No matter how lofty your understanding of realization principles, without the power of *samadhi*, it will not work. When your *samadhi* power reaches the first *dhyana*, there is the joy of detachment from birth. Joy means both psychological and physical joy. How do you generate physical joy? Physical joy is born from vitality. If your vitality is not complete, then you cannot generate physical joy. But in ordinary people, after the vitality is complete, sexual desire—ignorance—comes along with it. You will be able to refine *ching* vitality into *ch'i* energy only if you can be liberated from ignorance and desire, and transform them, and sublimate them: only then can you attain the realm of psychological joy.

One of my students wrote this in his notes and it pertains to this point: "When we are filled with the joy of the Dharma, this joy itself is a false thought, a big false thought, a major form of bondage and compulsion. Since it is false thought, why does the Buddha Dharma encourage joy?" This is because the other side of joy, the dark negative side of joy, is affliction. Joy is the sunny positive side: when joy is there, the positive energy is born. Joy is good for producing positive energy, and therefore Buddhist theory adopts the good thoughts of the positive side.

Realm	Taoist Correspondences	Esoteric Buddhist Correspondences
Desire	Vitality (*Ching*)	Bliss
Form	Energy (*Ch'i*)	Illumination
Formlessness	Spirit (*Shen*)	No-thought

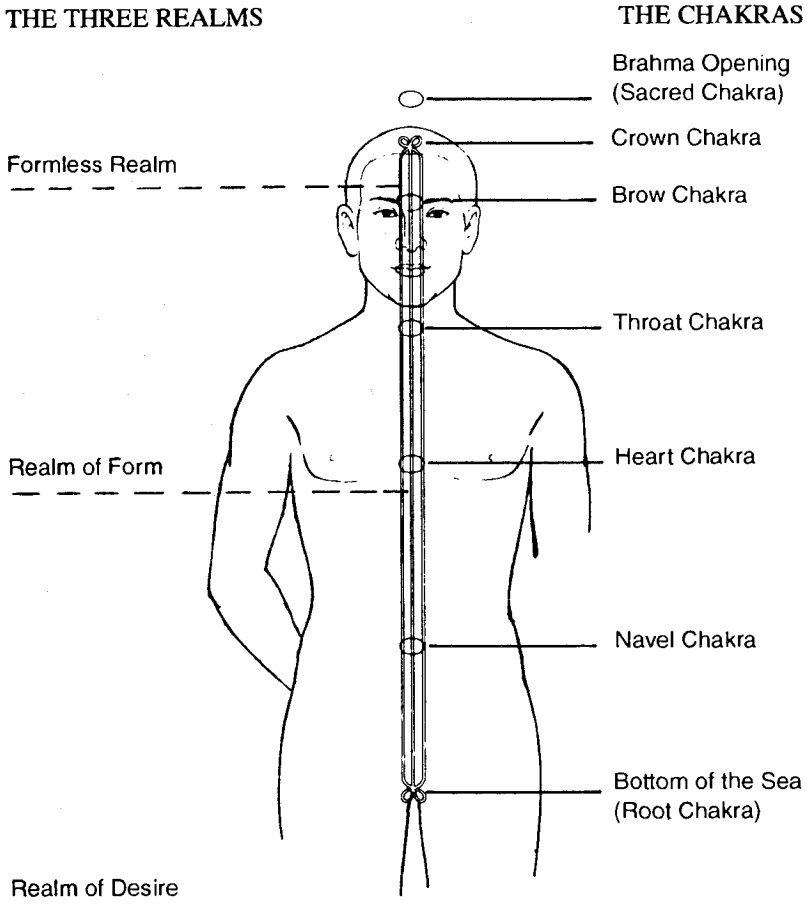

Figure 1. The three realms and their correspondence to Taoist and Esoteric Buddhist concepts.

Joy is also a false thought. However joy is the positive aspect; it is something engendered by good thoughts. Even good things are also thought. Thus, the realms of the four *dhyanas* and the eight *samadhis* are also thought. Only when you reach the purity of the total abandonment of thought, in the fourth *dhyana*, can this be counted as being liberated from thought. All of us hope that after we die we will not be reborn again in human bodies, but instead ascend into the heavenly plane of existence of the *devas*. But without *dhyana* and *samadhi*, there is no way to ascend to the heavenly plane.

Now let us ask a special question here: Have you studied the Buddhist scriptures so that you know how this world will end? Do you know there will be three forms of disaster and eight forms of hardship? Do you know about the three great eons? Let us explore these questions and show how it relates to our topic.

The Yogacarabhumi Shastra, volume 2, says: "This world will undergo destruction for twenty intermediate eons. After it is destroyed, it will be empty for twenty intermediate eons. Then it will undergo formation for twenty intermediate eons. After it has formed, it will abide for twenty intermediate eons. In each of these intermediate eons, three kinds of minor catastrophes will appear." At this time the Earth will suffer the catastrophes of scarcity (famine), of pestilence, and of weapons. For now we will not talk of these, which are just disasters in the human world. In the universe as a whole, however, there will be three great catastrophes, of fire, water, and wind.

If we cultivate the ten forms of good karma while we are still not enlightened, and cultivate discipline, concentration, and wisdom, we will be able to ascend to heaven because we have properly cultivated the good results of discipline, concentration, and wisdom. But will there be no more problems after we have ascended to the heavenly plane?

When the catastrophic fire comes, the volcanoes within the Earth will erupt, and even the Sun will explode. This will incinerate everything up to the second *dhyana* heaven. Everything below the Mahabrahma Heaven will be burned up, so the Sun and Moon will no longer exist. When the catastrophic fire at the end of the eon arrives, it will destroy the first *dhyana* heaven, including the Thirty-Three Heaven, and reach to the second *dhyana* heaven.

Above the second *dhyana* heaven, the catastrophe of fire will not reach. But when the catastrophic flood arrives, the whole Milky Way

Galaxy will be destroyed, the second *dhyana* heaven will be submerged, and the destruction will reach to the third *dhyana* heaven.

The catastrophic flood at the end of the eon will not destroy the third *dhyana* heaven, but when the catastrophic wind comes, when the whole atmosphere and whole material world crumbles, the third *dhyana* heaven will also be destroyed.

It is only those who have reached the fourth *dhyana* heaven and above, those who have arrived at the realm of true emptiness without thought, that the three catastrophes will not be able to reach. This is clearly stated in both the sutras and shastras of the Mahayana and Hinayana canons. In all of this you must note that the Buddhist scriptures give a detailed account of the four ages of the universe: formation, abiding, destruction, and emptiness. Everyone should make a proper study of this. Generally when people study the Buddhist scriptures, they particularly like to deal with philosophical questions related to Buddhist theory. They do not confront these real issues of cosmology at all, and cast them aside. But there is a real reason to study these things, for they show the impermanence of even high states of attainment which still do not reach enlightenment. In addition, we'll also see how these catastrophes relate to cultivation attainment.

Now our bodies are derived from the four elements of earth, water, fire, and air. All false thoughts, and especially sexual desire, fall within the scope of the two great catastrophes of fire and water. When desire increases, people smile, exchange glances, hold hands, embrace and touch each other. After that the body issues sticky secretions, bodily liquids undergo transformations, and hormonal changes occur. Then everything scatters: as sexual desires rise, all your meditative concentration vanishes and crumbles.

If your *ch'i* channels are not properly attuned, then when the catastrophe of wind arrives, even if you have reached the third *dhyana* you will not be able to rely on it. How can you then claim to be enlightened? Who are you fooling? Therefore, an ancient worthy said: "Study must be real study, realization must be genuine realization." Body and mind are One Mind, the Mind that is the source of mind and material things. You must take hold of that capability and see to it that you hold fast to it: only that will work. When you carry your cultivation to the point that false thoughts do not arise, this is just a bit of a realm of the sixth consciousness. You have still not leaped beyond the range of the first great catastrophe, the catastrophic fire.

How can you possibly say that you've reached the stage where false thoughts do not arise? If you are provoked, your anger immediately surges up. "When the mind of anger arises for a single moment, the door opens to eighty thousand barriers." When you do not like dealing with someone, the mind of anger also arises. As another illustration, which is a special fault of the Confucians, good and evil and right and wrong are too clear-cut and even this attitude belongs in the category of the mind of anger. Thus, to distinguish too clearly between good and evil and right and wrong means that angry thoughts are a serious problem. The verse:

> To be beyond convention is the bones of the Taoist immortals
> To have many sentiments is the heart of the buddhas

describes having a serious problem with the mind of craving. The verse

> The setting sun is not something without feelings
> It turns into the spring mud and protects the flowers

is also a description of having a serious problem with craving. If you say: "Alas! I can abandon everything, except for a certain little bit," this demonstrates a serious problem with ignorance. Later on, if you say: "If I abandon it, my cultivation will surely succeed," this way of thinking shows a serious case of arrogance. Later, if you say: "Too bad! At that time I was not doing anything right," this shows serious regret. All people have regrets. Later on, you are cultivating the Path on one hand, and on the other hand still harboring doubts, and wondering if ultimately there is any hope for you, and you are in a state of confusion without any grasp of what to do: this is a case of doubt. In sum, craving, anger, ignorance, arrogance, doubt—every one of these is a serious problem.

When we perform our self-examinations, even if the sixth consciousness does not arise and does not stir all day long, and we are pure and clear, this is no more than dead-tree Zen. When the sixth consciousness presents you with a chance state of pure and clear immediate awareness, this does not count as any sort of attainment because this state just teases you for a while then ends. What's more, this pure clarity still depends on the body being in good condition and the *ch'i* channels opening through. When the catastrophic wind

arrives, it brings along sickness and pain, and the *ch'i* channels are blocked: then this bit of Zen deserts you. This is exactly the phenomenon of catastrophic wind in the body. So are the *ch'i* channels worth talking about or not? They definitely are. Why? Because if earth, water, fire and wind [the four elements that make up the body] are not properly attuned, then don't even talk about the Path! If you cannot transform this body, then how will you be able to transform mind? You definitely will not be able to transform it.

When the three catastrophes of fire, water, and wind arrive, the heavens of the first, second, and third *dhyanas* will disappear, the whole world will be destroyed and the Sun and Moon will be destroyed, to say nothing of us here. Tell me, when that happens, will you still be in a state of purity, emptying out past, present, and future? Let's see if you will be empty then! This is because our present emptying out of the past, present, and future depends on the chance harmonization of the four elements to form our bodies. It is not that we have really arrived at illuminating mind and seeing true nature. We've just achieved a chance bit of purity—that's all! You must pay special attention to this point.

Thus, the later generations of Zen people all considered this chance state of mind where the sixth consciousness is a bit pure and clear to be a method for attaining enlightenment. Nowadays, many people think that they have arrived at this, but they forget that this purity is born while their bodies are healthy. In reality, if we were to measure their brain waves at this time, their brain waves would still be moving, and the electrocardiagram waves would show quite a bit of movement. Brain waves can be controlled using the conscious mind. Our intent can control our thinking, and can manage to make it stop. But for this to happen the body must be absolutely healthy.

If the body is not healthy, and you want to forcibly control thoughts, the brain and the nervous system can become disordered. That's why the *ch'i* channels are so important. If you do sitting meditation while your body is still not healthy, once your ideas go wrong they can bring on mental problems. Many people making religious efforts encounter this situation. They develop mental problems, such as delusions, because they are unhealthy both physiologically and psychologically. Only people who are absolutely healthy can cultivate the Path and speak of illuminating mind and seeing true nature. So how is this mind to be illuminated? How is true nature to be seen? Both Buddhist theory and meditation work must be coordinated

together. That is the answer. *The Surangama Sutra* has already divulged a bit of information about this so you should use your wisdom and go study it!

As for the rest of *The Yogacarabhumi Shastra*, I will introduce the important parts in due order. We can say that the contents of *The Yogacarabhumi Shastra* are dazzling, simply too much to feast the eyes on. So we must digest it bit by bit.

The Zen School uses *prajna*, transcendental wisdom, to discuss the true nature of phenomena. Yogacara philosophy, however, puts special emphasis on the characteristics of perceptual phenomena. According to the account generally given by the later generations of Buddhist scholars, the school of learning focused on *prajna* is derived from the system of the Bodhisattva Nagarjuna. We will follow this account. The relationship of Nagarjuna to Yogacara Buddhism also is derived from this system. For a thousand or two thousand years, in India and China alike, the Madhyamika School and the Yogacara School, or in Chinese terms, the school of true nature and the school of characteristics, have contended with each other over two issues.

Madhyamika takes *prajna* as the basic guiding principle, and considers that all phenomena are ultimately empty, completely empty [of inherent, independent identities]. Yogacara takes consciousness-only as the basic guiding principle, and considers that all phenomena have a supernal existence. This so-called supernal existence means this: The appearances and functioning of all the myriad forms of existence are all empty, and have no independent identities, no self-nature. But there is that certain something, that metaphysical something called supernal, that really exists. This, however, is not the same as the existence of worldly things; rather, it is this capability [by virtue of which worldly things appear]. The functioning of all the myriad forms of existence in the world are born from that certain something, and it is not nonexistent.

Some followers of the two schools struggled fiercely over supernal existence versus ultimate emptiness: it was a struggle over learned points of view. The way I myself see it, there is no real conflict here: [Madhyamika] *prajna* always speaks of existence, and [Yogacara] consciousness-only is speaking precisely of emptiness. The conflict arose when some people made a big fuss about something they misunderstood when they heard it from authoritative sources, and went on and on fighting. This supposed controversy is really senseless and stupid.

Why do I say that [Madhyamika] *prajna* speaks about existence? In *The Heart Sutra*, Buddha says: "Shariputra, this is the emptiness-characteristic of all things." He did not say: this is the emptiness-nature of all things. All phenomena are characterized by emptiness, all forms are empty. At the end of the sutra Buddha also tells us: "True reality is not empty." Obviously, it exists.

And what about [Yogacara] consciousness-only? It has its basic principles in five sutras and thirteen shastras. In *The Sandhinirmocana Sutra*, Buddha says:

> The storehouse consciousness
> is very profound and subtle
> All the seeds in it are like a rushing stream
> If I did not reveal it to the ordinary people
> I fear they would cling to discriminating mind
> and consider it a self.

This is clearly talking about emptiness, isn't it? Didn't Buddha explain very clearly? So what is there to fight about? Nevertheless, this doesn't matter. If scholars didn't argue, what would they have to do? They read the books, so they must fight and contend for fame, mustn't they? (The audience laughs.)

Later on these two schools were a bit different, so the Zen patriarch, Bodhidharma, told us to base ourselves on *The Lankavatara Sutra*. *The Lankavatara Sutra* is an important scripture of both the Madhyamika and the Yogacara Schools, and also of the Zen School. Since we are talking of *The Lankavatara Sutra*, we must understand Yogacara.

If we turn and look at the Zen School, every one of the Zen masters, starting with Lin-chi, Kuei-shan and Yang-shan, Tung-shan and Ts'ao-shan, Yun-men and Fa-yen—every one of them had mastered Buddhist theory and the scriptural teachings completely before they put aside the scriptures to study Zen. People these days always rashly claim to be members of the Zen School, when they have not studied the scriptural teachings at all!

In the verses in Dharma master Hsuan-tsang's work, *Verse Guidelines for the Eight Consciousnesses*, the verse on the eighth consciousness says this: "By nature it does not revolve in the five omnipresent activities." The *alaya* consciousness is omnipresent, but if not for the functioning of the other seven consciousnesses, not only would it not itself create good and bad karma, but it would not interact with phenomena of defilement. Thus the *alaya* consciousness is said to be "nonrevolving and indefinite." If you take the *alaya* consciousness and transform it into a purified, cleansed consciousness, then you can illuminate mind and see true nature, and you can transform it back into its inherent identity as the matrix of the Tathagatas. Before this transformation, the aspect of ignorance all belongs to the *alaya* consciousness.

"The five omnipresent activities" are intentionality, contact, sensation, conception, and thought. It is very important that you remember these five omnipresent activities. Only then will it be easy to get power when you sit in meditation, only then will you be able to fully fathom the truth. This is just what Zen master Fa-yen said: "At the pinnacle of truth, you forget sentiments and verbal descriptions." Only when you have mastered the principles of the teaching, and understood this, will it be effective when you do meditation work. If you have not mastered the principles, then it will not work right.

These five omnipresent activities are there in the first five consciousnesses, and the sixth consciousness too is inseparable from them. The seventh consciousness has them, and the eighth consciousness cannot escape them either. So you see how terrible these five omnipresent activities are. Everything is them. That's why they are called omnipresent activities.

When all of you do your meditation work, do you investigate by aligning the five omnipresent activities with the five *skandhas*? You must be clear about the connection between the two. If you do not understand these concepts, and you still want to study Zen and do meditation work until you illuminate mind and see true nature, how can you see true nature? The five *skandhas* are form, sensation, conception, motivational synthesis, and consciousness. The five omnipresent activities also include conception: are these two categories of conception one and the same or not? You must distinguish them clearly.

When we sit in meditation, and we cannot do it properly, it is because we cannot empty out false thoughts. Why can't we empty them out? Because the five omnipresent activities are present everywhere. So how can we empty out false thoughts? Contact comes into play: Are our bodies comfortable or not? Are our *ch'i* channels open or not? Once contact is made, there is sensation. When we feel sensations, we certainly know it. Conception also comes into play: when

there is a bit of clarity, we feel there is not a bit of false thought there. When you think you have no false thoughts, this is precisely the realm of thinking.

These five omnipresent activities fill the eight consciousnesses, and have never been interrupted. When you are aware of nothing at all, among the fifty-one mental states, this is sleep. This is like when a person passes out into a state of total oblivion, or falls asleep from extreme fatigue. Yogacara calls this kind of phenomenon mindless sleep and total oblivion, when the sixth consciousness is not operating. But this is not called emptiness: if you call it emptiness, this would be oblivious inert emptiness without spiritual awareness.

When we study Zen today, we must devise new methods. We cannot keep using the old methods. We will not necessarily become enlightened when we see peach blossoms. There are all kinds of flowers in the world, even plastic flowers!

Today, the more science develops, the more it can help those of us who study the Buddhist Path. When modern people cultivate the Path, it should be easier for us to get it right than for the people of the past, because there are many scientific principles to give us genuine help. Yet people in general still linger in the backward past. What the verse says is really true:

> How many fish have turned into dragons
> While the frogs are still croaking?

The fish have all changed into dragons and flown up into the sky, while the frogs in the fields are still there croaking, loudly voicing their complaints. Science is progressing, and so those studying Zen must change their methods. This is a fact.

Before we illuminate mind and see true nature, the five omnipresent activities will certainly be there in the *alaya* consciousness, the eighth consciousness. When we see the Path and realize the fruit of enlightenment, the five omnipresent activities are transformed into wondrous function. In Hsuan-tsang's *Verse Guidelines for the Eight Consciousnesses*, the second verse says:

> Even the vast Buddhist canon cannot exhaust
> [the *alaya* consciousness]
> Its profound depths [underlie] the seven waves
> [of the other consciousnesses]:
> objects are the wind.

Pay attention to the next two lines:

> Receiving influences, holding the seeds,
> the root of the bodily vessel
> After you go, before you come, it is the master.

When people are about to die, they black out, and the first five consciousnesses gradually disintegrate: the *alaya* consciousness is the last to go. When people are reincarnated in other wombs, the *alaya* consciousness is the first to come.

Because of the present scientific era, with its new body of knowledge, questions arise for Buddhism. Suppose, for instance, that a person has just died and his eyes are immediately removed and put in cold storage so they can be transplanted into someone else. The question is, in such a case, has the eye-consciousness [in the Buddhist sense] of these eyes died or not? Following the same principle, when a kidney is transplanted, has what the Buddhist scriptures term "the root of life" of this kidney died or not?

Here's another question where we have to match up the principles of Buddhism and science. When the Buddhist scriptures talk about the process of going into the womb and forming the embryo, naturally they talk about the physical heart. The question is this: These days, the physical heart can be replaced by an artificial one made of plastic and metal, and the person can go on living. What principle can account for this in Buddhist terms?

We who are Buddha's disciples cannot but make revisions to deal with these questions. We cannot make strained efforts to uphold the original explanations found in the scriptures. Now let us look at *The Yogacarabhumi Shastra*, volume 1, where it says:

> How are the karma of the body and karma of language generated? From the action before the knowledge that generates the karma of the body and of language, next desire is born, and then functioning starts. Then, following upon this functioning as a precondition, the wind of the karma of the body and of language starts revolving. From this is generated the karma of the body and the karma of language.
>
> This is where the consciousness of the new embryo first lodges.

When it enters the womb, "then it is called the heart of flesh." Naturally this is connected to the physical heart. The shastra says:

"Thus consciousness first lodges in this place, and at the end this is the last place from which it leaves." In other words, when you die, this is the last place it leaves.

Here there is a question. Modern medicine can transplant a person's heart and enable that person to live. Thus, as science has progressed, many areas have come to light where it seems to conflict with the Buddhist scriptures. Nevertheless, science has been a great help in proving the Buddhist scriptures and also in regard to cultivating practice.

When the people of ancient times translated the Buddhist scriptures into Chinese, they did not always distinguish clearly between "mind" and "true nature." Sometimes they called the basic essence "mind," but the word "mind" also was used to refer to false mind, the mind that clings to objects. Sometimes *hsing*, the Chinese word for "true nature," was used for "properties." It was also used in the phrase "illuminate mind and see true nature." It was also used to mean "qualities" and to mean "human nature" and also to refer to sexual desire. It was also used in the expression *chi-hsing* "short-tempered," meaning someone who gets angry easily. So ultimately what is meant by these words "mind" *hsin* and "true nature" *hsing*? It is not clear. So the Buddhist translators, including even the incomparably learned Dharma master Hsuan-tsang, used this term "the heart of flesh" too arbitrarily, and this is a sample of one of the problems we've inherited. But the ancient and modern vocabularies are not the same, and there is nothing to be done about it.

When a person dies, first the sixth consciousness leaves the body, and then the seventh consciousness disappears. Before the whole body has gotten cold, the eighth consciousness has still not left it. While this bit of left over energy of warmth, life, and consciousness still remains in the eyeball, if the eyeball is removed quickly, it can be transplanted.

Another example of this kind of leftover energy can be seen when a worm is cut in half. Both parts continue to squirm around. The question is: Which half is the mind in? The ancients had an answer to this question. They said that when the worm is cut in two pieces, it is not a question of mind or not mind. To explain the fact that both pieces kept moving, they used the expression "the leftover energy is not cut off." This meant that the function brought about by the mind's karmic energy, called "the leftover energy," was not yet cut off.

When we die, and are not yet completely cold, if our eyes are immediately removed, the leftover energy of the eye-consciousness is still there. But the hospital handles them by immediately putting them in cold storage. Wouldn't this take the leftover consciousness and freeze it to death? What is the principle in this?

Thus, people these days who study Buddhism must pay attention to such things. They must not shut themselves behind locked doors, and proclaim their enlightenment in isolation. They must match up Buddhism and science, which is one of the callings for today. The reason why we make no progress when we seek the Path and do meditation work is because we are all in the dark about the methods by which to seek realization. On top of this, we are intoxicated with ourselves. We deceive ourselves and deceive others. These are all problems.

So this time we must make a special point of seeking out arguments from source materials bearing on both material and psychological aspects. All of you must pay particular attention to both.

3

CULTIVATING GENUINE *SAMADHI*

Our series of lectures has progressed quite far, but in truth we still have not reached beyond a superficial knowledge of the contents of the process of cultivating realization. Since it is urgent that you gain a direct experiential understanding of that fact that in his forty-nine years of expounding the Dharma, Buddha never really spoke a single word, I will be changing my teaching method, the better to let all of you gain some benefit. Whether or not you will be able to benefit, I do not know.

Accordingly, right before this lecture, I decided to employ one of the meditation cases of the Zen School. When I first wrote about this meditation case, it was for a friend. At the time, he was in the hospital in an emergency situation.

People who are studying Zen should pay particular attention to this meditation case. Even those who are studying Taoism and Esoteric Buddhism should pay special attention to it. This meditation case involves the great teacher Yuan-wu K'o-ch'in (1063-1135), the most famous Zen teacher of the period that spanned the Northern Sung and the Southern Sung dynasties. (See *The Record of Pointing at the Moon*, volume 29.)

Living at the juncture between the Northern and Southern Sung, Zen master Yuan-wu K'o-ch'in could be called a man who defined an era. If we make a rigorous study of the matter, the development of the thought of the Sung Neo-Confucians and the changes in their methods of cultivation are all linked to Zen master Yuan-wu. Yuan-wu's great disciple was Zen master Ta-hui Tsung-kao, whose fame was unsurpassed in the Southern Sung period. After Ta-hui, the Zen School slowly declined and by the Yuan and Ming periods, it had deteriorated even more.

Yuan-wu was an amazing Zen teacher. We can also say that after the T'ang period, for the Zen School's cultivation of realization, it was a period reaching a conclusion. What was good about Yuan-wu was that he was good at learning and good at cultivating practice

and good at all kinds of things, good enough to be made a model of cultivating realization. He was a native of Szechuan.

In the past I had a friend who said: "In the last period of every dynasty, the most outstanding talent was always a person from Szechuan." I had another friend who said: "Empress Wu Tse-t'ien (who held supreme power around A.D. 700) was from Szechuan, and the famous beauties like Wang Chao-chun (a lady in the court of Emperor Han Yuan-ti who was given in marriage to the king of the Huns, c. 40 B.C.) and Yang Kuei-fei (the powerful wife of Emperor T'ang Hsuan-tsung in the mid-eighth century) were from Szechuan. When the dynasty was about to be replaced, the great Zen masters were all natives of Szechuan. This is very wondrous."

Yuan-wu's family were Confucians. In his youth he read the Four Books and the Five Classics of the Confucian canon, and was taught Confucius and Mencius. His studies in worldly learning were excellent. In his biography it says: "Every day he memorized a thousand words (of the classics)." This is how strong his memory was. One day when he was little, he went to a temple to play. In the temple was a Buddhist sutra. He picked up the sutra and looked at it, and he was dumbstruck. The record goes that at that moment, "he hesitated, and looked wistful, as if he had picked up something familiar." The first time he saw a Buddhist sutra, he was naturally drawn in by it. He looked at it again, and couldn't bear to put it down right away. He read a section, then turned back and read more. He did this three times. After he had finished reading the sutra, he felt very unhappy, as if he had lost something, and he was very sad. Then he thought, in the past, in a previous life, I must have been a Buddhist monk. Then he went to ask his family for permission to leave home.

When you study the biographies of eminent monks, you discover that 60 or 70 percent of them came from Confucian families. When they started out, they were entirely within traditional Chinese concepts, and opposed Buddhism. The ones who ended up succeeding in their study of Buddhism were all this type of person. This, too, is a meditation point, a big meditation point which you should go investigate yourselves.

After Yuan-wu left home, he studied the principles of the teaching with a Dharma teacher. With his natural ability, he completely mastered Buddhist theory. Then an opportunity arose. He became very sick, sick to the point of death. Based on the circumstances he described later in the Zen hall when he was expounding the Dharma,

after he had achieved enlightenment and received the Dharma, what happened was this: At that time he had really died, and he felt that the road ahead was dark and uncertain but at the last moment he held death off. He could not die, because he had still not completed the Path. So he gave it a jump and came back.

There's a question here. After he has died, is it possible for a man with this kind of courage to jump back? From the point of view of consciousness-only theory, Yuan-wu had not necessarily really died.

To draw an analogy, during the war of resistance against Japan, I had a friend in the army who was killed by a bullet, who later came back to life. After the event he said that dying was delightful. After the bullet hit, his body felt indescribably cold. It was extremely painful, but after the pain came a feeling of extraordinary comfort. That comfort lasted for only an instant: there was a feeling of comfort, and then it ended, and he died. When he had just died, at first he wasn't aware of anything, it all went dark and empty. This is precisely what Chinese traditionally described as "on the road to the Yellow Springs," an expanse of murky grayish yellow. [In traditional Chinese terms, the Yellow Springs are like the Greek Hades, the realm of the dead.] How he came back to life later he did not know: he just felt as if he were on a springboard, then there was a somersault, and he came back. Actually he had not been totally dead since the *alaya* consciousness had not left him yet. In the Chinese *Book of Rites*, this kind of phenomenon is called "false death."

Returning to our story, we have to ask ultimately, what was the event of death that Zen master Yuan-wu had described? This is a question. When we study Buddhism and cultivate the Path we are scientific. We do not explain things any way we please. What we ought to believe, we believe. It is not at all that we do not believe, but that we must take responsibility for our own cultivation of the Path. We cannot blindly deceive ourselves.

After Yuan-wu came back to life, he felt that Buddhism had been of no use at all at this juncture. He felt deeply that by studying only theory he could not completely escape this thing, and that he must cultivate practice. He told his teacher that he must resort to another enlightened teacher, and travel the road of cultivating realization. In *The Diamond Sutra*, Buddha says: "If you see me with form, or seek for me with sound, you are traveling a misguided path, and you will not be able to see the Tathagata." Yuan-wu thought that reciting the sutras

as he had been doing under his first teacher's guidance at the time was seeking in sound and form, and so he left.

Yuan-wu went to seek the Dharma from Zen master Chen-chueh Sheng, who was very famous in the Zen School at the time. Chen-chueh Sheng was enlightened. His reputation, his power in the Path, and his meditative accomplishments in cultivating practice were all very lofty. When Yuan-wu went to see him, Chen-chueh had just become sick. He had developed a running sore on his arm, and it was very painful. The pus that was running out of it was filthy, but he said it was the Dharma milk of Ts'ao-ch'i [the Sixth Patriarch's abode]. With this response, how could Yuan-wu not have had his doubts? This is a meditation case.

Yuan-wu was stunned by what Chen-Chueh had said, and asked: Master! Is the Buddha Dharma like this? The old teacher did not say a word in reply.

This is the highest teaching method, a Zen teaching method. By refusing to answer you, I surround you and attack because at such times, a teacher's normal answer will be useless to you. To cultivate the Path and study Buddhism, you yourself must find the answer and seek realization.

Yuan-wu could not find the truth in this encounter with Chen-chueh, so all he could do was leave. After he left Szechuan, all those whom he visited to study with were the first class Zen teachers of the Sung dynasty. At that time it was not like today: there were many people who had really cultivated practice and really awakened to the Path. Yuan-wu traveled all over to study with them. Finally he found Zen master Hui-t'ang.

As soon as Hui-t'ang saw Yuan-wu, he told everyone that in the future, the Dharma of Lin-chi would rest with this young man. It was like giving him an advance prediction of enlightenment. Sometimes encouraging someone is not a good thing. This statement by Hui-t'ang poisoned Yuan-wu: he thought the older generation of Zen teachers were all saying that he was extraordinary, and the result was that he started to get arrogant.

Later on Yuan-wu came to Wu-tsu Temple where the abbot was the famous Wu-tsu Fa-yen. Wu-tsu was somewhat younger than the other Zen masters of the time. Yuan-wu discussed with Wu-tsu all that he had learned of Buddhism throughout his whole life, and all the experiential realms he had achieved in his meditation work. But Wu-tsu never gave him one word of approval so Yuan-wu got very angry.

He not only argued loudly with Wu-tsu, but even swore at him. Wu-tsu said: K'o-ch'in, you can swear at me, but it will be useless. You will have to get very ill once again, and be invaded by fevers and chills one after another. When the road ahead is dark and gloomy, only then will you be able to realize that what I have said is not wrong. Now get out!

After Yuan-wu had left Wu-tsu, when he came to Gold Mountain Temple in the Chekiang-Kiangsi region, a major sickness came upon him. He brought forth all his usual Buddhism, the theories of *The Diamond Sutra* and *The Lankavatara Sutra* and *The Surangama Sutra;* then he hauled out all the realms he had attained in his usual meditation work, the *ch'i* channels, the mysterious gate, and the like. But none of this could ward off the sickness, or resist birth and death. At this point, he started to cry. Then he made a vow: If I do not die, I will immediately return to Wu-tsu's place.

As things turned out, Yuan-wu subsequently recovered from his sickness, and he went back to Wu-tsu right away. He said to Wu-tsu: "Master, I am reporting back for duty." Wu-tsu was very happy, but he did not ask Yuan-wu whether or not he had gotten sick, he just told him to go the the Zen hall. Yuan-wu served as Wu-tsu's attendant, and besides his regular work, he was permitted to come and go in Wu-tsu's private room and attend upon him there.

There is a question here. Yuan-wu's biography clearly records that he made very serious efforts in his meditation work, and he had attained many experiential realms. When he sat in meditation he regularly emitted light and moved the earth. He looked as if he had attained the Path. But this did not count.

When you reach the barrier of death, you cannot rely on your kinfolk: neither parents nor children can take your place, neither money nor position can rescue you. It is dark and gloomy: even Amitabha Buddha cannot save you, and if you want to recite the buddha-name, you will not have the energy to do so. When they put the oxygen mask over your nose, at that moment, will you be able to resist death or not? You may have attained a level in your everyday practice of the Buddha Dharma that heavenly flowers shower down upon you, but at this point in time it will be utterly useless. This fact of death is something real: when it arrives, you will turn back at last.

Throughout his life, the times when Yuan-wu gained power were in several episodes of serious illness. You should not lull yourselves by thinking: "We are still young, our physical strength and our nerves

are still in good shape, we have a bit of mystic experience and a bit of meditative accomplishment." You can work on Buddhism, and you can do some thinking, but this will all be useless. The moment of death will arrive someday and it will be too late; all you will be qualified to do is cry out in pain.

At that time Yuan-wu had already been working at Buddhism for more than ten years at least. He had mastered Buddhist theory, and his meditation work was not bad either. He thought he was enlightened. What finally happened was that when a serious illness arose, he almost didn't make it through. There is another question here. Master Chen-chueh Sheng's meditation saying, calling the pus from a running sore "the Dharma milk of Ts'ao-ch'i" had been on Yuan-wu's mind all along, and he had not yet resolved it.

Tell me again: Is this Path ultimately materialistic or is it mind-only? When we say that you can attain *samadhi* when your *ch'i* channels have been opened, this is materialistic. Without this body, what would the *ch'i* channels be based on? If opening the *ch'i* channels is the Path, then what Path are we cultivating? This is materialistic. If we say that everything is created by mind-only, then when we sit here and want to have the *jen-mai* and *tu-mai* channels open, then they will open; if we want them to open, but in fact they do not open, how can this be called mind-only? If we say that meditation work requires a gradual process of waiting for a spontaneous physiological transformation, isn't this materialistic? If it is materialistic, can it be called cultivating the Path? These are all questions. If you think that opening the *ch'i* channels is the Path, let me remind you that this is just playing with physical sensations and has nothing to do with the Path.

One day Yuan-wu's opportunity finally came. There was a judicial officer *(t'i-hsing* is an official title that corresponds in modern times to a chief prosecutor at the highest level law courts) who was a Buddhist layman who came to see Wu-tsu. He asked about the essentials of mind according to the Buddha Dharma, and Master Wu-tsu said to him: "You have read love poems, haven't you? I'm asking you about these two lines in the love poem by the man of T'ang":

> She calls out to her maid again and again,
> but actually she has nothing for her to do
> She just wants her gentleman friend to recognize her voice.

This poem comes from the biography of Huo Hsiao-yu in a collection of essays by a writer of the T'ang period. A young lady in olden

times wanted to communicate with her boyfriend, she had no opportunity to do so, so she deliberately called out her maid's name in the house, but in reality she was calling out so her beloved would hear, telling him, "Here I am." Master Wu-tsu was explaining Zen, and he spoke of this: all he had to do was mention these two lines, and the judicial officer awakened.

We, too, are calling out to our beloved when we chant *The Diamond Sutra*, and when we chant *The Hua-yen Sutra*. We call out to the maid again and again, but actually we have nothing for her to do. When we have comprehended the scriptures we must recognize this. This lecture right now is also a case of "She calls out to her maid again and again, but actually she has nothing for her to do."

This judicial officer had awakened, but of course there are degrees of depth in awakening. Wu-tsu said to him: "You have reached this point, but you still must study carefully." Yuan-wu came in just as Wu-tsu was saying this. He saw his master was teaching someone, so he seized the opportunity and stood to one side to listen. At that point Yuan-wu proceeded to ask: "Did this judicial officer awaken this way?" Wu-tsu said: "He only recognized the voice." In other words, he did understand to some extent, but only a little, not completely. Then Yuan-wu asked: "Master, if the girl in the poem only wanted the gentleman to recognize her voice, if he has already recognized it, what else is there that is not right?"

Let me interject something at this point in the narrative. Concerning "The Dharma Gate of Perfect Penetration" of Bodhisattva Kuan-shih-yin ["The one who hears the sounds of the world"] in *The Surangama Sutra*, the Bodhisattva Manjushri exclaimed in praise: "The essence of the true teaching for this region is pure in sound and hearing. If you want to attain *samadhi*, you can really enter into it by means of hearing." In other words the essence of the teaching for this world of ours called Saha, the best method for cultivating the Path and becoming enlightened, is to enter the Path via the sounds of the Bodhisattva Kuan-shih-yin. Therefore people who cultivate the Dharma Gate of Kuan-shih-yin are always listening to sounds. For example, when they chant the name of Amitabha Buddha, they turn back and listen to the sound. Some people play tape recordings [of buddha-name recitation] and listen to them. Later they keep searching so they can witness that the two characteristics of movement and stillness are clearly unborn, but the result is that the more they search, the more unclear it is. This is because this is not the real Dharma Gate of Kuan-shih-yin.

If we read through *The Surangama Sutra*, we read that the Bodhisattva Kuan-shih-yin herself "enters *samadhi* via hearing, contemplation, and cultivation." What is hearing? When Buddha expounds the Dharma, we understand: we gain entry on the basis of sound. Hearing, hearing and understanding: this is Kuan-shih-yin's principle. The truth must be investigated: this is study, this is contemplation. When the truth has been studied and comprehended, we add the cultivation of practice: only then do we enter into the Dharma Gate of Kuan-shih-yin. Who says it is just a matter of hearing sound? Buddhist theory tells you that sound is impermanent, that sound is fundamentally a phenomenon that is born and perishes. If you hold to sound to accomplish the Path, how will you be able to realize the fruit of enlightenment? The Dharma Gate of the Bodhisattva Kuan-shih-yin has been spoiled by us. She clearly tells us "She enters *samadhi* via hearing, contemplation, and cultivation." If in the end everyone fails to use correct contemplation, and just relies on hearing, this is the same as the question Yuan-wu had doubts about at that time.

Continuing with our story, when Yuan-wu asked, "What else is there that is not right?" Wu-tsu glowered at him and asked: "What is the meaning of the patriarch coming from the West? The cypress tree in the garden." Then he shouted. When Yuan-wu was hit by this shout from Master Wu-tsu, he was scared out of his wits so he turned around and fled.

This moment was very wondrous. If Yuan-wu had not reached this level of experience in his efforts in meditation work, he would not have known it. At that moment, Yuan-wu was truly in the dark, and he had forgotten even his own body. He turned around and ran out. He kept on running until he got outside the temple gate. There he saw a flock of wild birds sitting on the fence outside the gate. When the wild birds heard the sound of this monk come running out with his footsteps clomping along, they immediately took flight. When Yuan-wu heard the sound of their wings flapping, he was truly enlightened. He said: "Isn't this sound?" But even after he was enlightened, he still had a long road of meditation work he had to travel: after enlightenment, he still had to cultivate practice.

Yuan-wu wrote an enlightenment verse, and presented it to Wu-tsu. This, too, was in the style of a love poem. This is a meditation point. Both teacher and disciple were very strict in their adherence to the code of discipline, but now they are both writing love poems.

Isn't this a violation of the precept against beautiful speech? Here is Yuan-wu's verse:

The fragrance of the golden duck wafts
through the brocade curtains
The song of the flute echoes through the glade,
someone helps the drunkard home
A bit of youthful romance
Only the beautiful woman can know for herself.

This time Wu-tsu was delighted. He said to Yuan-wu: K'o-ch'in, becoming a buddha and being a Zen master is not something that those of small capacity can talk about. When I see you like this today, I am very happy for you. From this point on, whenever the old master Wu-tsu met anyone, he told them: That attendant of mine has already learned Zen. This became known all over, and from this point on Yuan-wu's fame spread. This is the story of Yuan-wu's enlightenment. Every element in it is a meditation case.

In human affairs, if there is some principle, there is sure to be something that embodies it, and if there is some phenomenon, there is sure to be a principle that accounts for it. For example, do ghosts and spirits ultimately exist or not? There is sure to be some principle that accounts for this phenomenon. Sometimes a certain phenomenon exists, but we do not clearly understand the principle behind it, because our learning or knowledge is insufficient. Sometimes we understand a principle, but we have no way to arrive at a phenomenon that embodies it, because our experience is not sufficient, and our experiments do not reach that far.

For example, everyone who studies Buddhism understands many Buddhist principles. But, if in the end they do not do any meditation work, they cannot verify these principles. Thus, cultivating realization will not work unless you align theory and practice.

The third item in the basic program of seeing truth, cultivating realization, and carrying out vows is carrying out the bodhisattva vows, and this is even more important. You must truly recognize that everything depends on carrying out vows. The reason you do not succeed in carrying out the bodhisattva vows is because your perception of truth is inadequate, and you do not recognize it sufficiently.

Of the ordinary people who follow the road of studying Buddhism, one kind are the religious type; they think that they will

succeed as long as they have faith. This faith takes all the questions about which we have doubts, such as "How does life come about?", "Where do we go when we die?", and all our questions about the universe, and turns them over to a power that goes beyond us. Such people are not concerned with what to call this power or how to describe it.

But when we think about such people and observe them, and try to figure them out by measuring them against ourselves, those of us who study Buddhism and cultivate the Path examine ourselves and ask ourselves: Do we really believe in Buddha? It doesn't seem like it! Do we really believe that there are six planes of cyclic existence and cause and effect extending through past, present, and future? It doesn't seem like it! Let's not deceive ourselves. If we really believe Buddha, then when we get sick, we know that sickness is created by karma, and that karma is born from the mind, and that mind itself is buddha. If we believe Buddha, then when we must die, we will simply go ahead and die! We would not even go to see a doctor. Let me ask you, would you act this way?

When the Third Patriarch found the Second Patriarch, and the Fourth Patriarch found the Third Patriarch, it was as if they followed the same pattern.

The Third Patriarch's whole body was sick, and he asked the Second Patriarch to help him repent his wrongdoings. The Second Patriarch told him: "Bring your wrongdoings out and I will perform a repentance for you." After a long silence, the Third Patriarch said: "When I search for my wrongdoings, in the end I cannot find them." The Second Patriarch then said: "Well then, I have already repented your wrongdoings for you." At this, the Third Patriarch was enlightened.

When the Fourth Patriarch sought the Dharma Gate of liberation from the Third Patriarch, the Third Patriarch asked him: "Who is binding you?" The Fourth Patriarch replied: "There is no one binding me." Then the Third Patriarch said: "Then what liberation are you seeking?" At these words, the Fourth Patriarch was enlightened.

Would this work for us? Don't you say that your whole body is sick when you have a cold, and a runny nose, and a headache? Someone asks: "Who is binding you?" You say: "A cold is binding me." If you say everything is created by mind-only, why can you be liberated? If you say this is a sickness, and you cannot be liberated from it, and you must seek to repent your wrongdoings, then it is not mind-only anymore. This is the question. Don't deceive yourself!

Of course there are people with true faith that is very strong. They can reduce the severity of sickness, and even eliminate it. But this method is very difficult. Thus, *The Hua-yen Sutra* mentions faith first of all: "Faith is the source of the Path, the mother of virtuous qualities." However, faith is not at all easy. Therefore, the first of the fifty-five stations of the bodhisattvas is called faith, because of the extraordinary difficulty of genuine faith. This, of course, is faith at a higher level, not superstitious faith: it must be true faith.

Speaking frankly, we have not been able to achieve real faith. Naturally this incapacity means that we have not been able to succeed in our meditation work and we have not been able to carry out our vows. The reason why we cannot achieve real faith is because of two psychological problems. One is ignorance, stupidity, a lack of true wisdom. The other is self-pride: people are not willing to believe in other people, and only believe in themselves. They feel this way toward the buddhas and bodhisattvas, and also toward their teachers.

There is another kind of person, our kind. We sit in meditation, we study Zen, we have a principle for everything, and comprehend everything. Even though we study Zen, and practice Pure Land Buddhism, and contemplate emptiness, and cultivate cessation and contemplation, and guard the apertures, in none of this do we go beyond two things—namely, knowing and feeling. In terms of the five skandhas, knowing is the skandha of conception, and feeling is the skandha of sensation. Behind the skandha of conception is the skandha of consciousness, and behind knowing are the transformations of consciousness only. We can talk of this principle later.

People who study Buddhism encounter one difficulty at the outset: they feel that thinking and false thoughts cannot be cut off. Next they feel that they themselves have no way really to enter *samadhi*. For these reasons, they employ various kinds of techniques: they study meditation sayings, they observe mind, they guard the apertures, they temper their breath. They hold on tight, wanting to purify away false thoughts. The average person studying Buddhism is always revolving in these realms. No matter how you revolve through them, there is one point you must heed. All you have to do is consent to stop and rest: then your coloring will naturally improve and your body will begin to get healthy again. After this you will think that you have the Path, but in fact you will be wrong. This has nothing to do with the Path, it is just the condition produced by stopping and resting.

The same principle holds when you get sick. All you have to do is be able to stop and rest, and the sickness will definitely get better. Sleeping and doing sitting meditation are both ways to protect your health without spending money. There is nothing special in this. It shouldn't be mixed together with discussions of the Path.

In these conditions, many people have studied Buddhism for a long time, and worked very hard at sitting meditation, without ever finding a way to enter *samadhi*. One of the basic reasons is that they have no knowledge of *samadhi*. Everybody thinks that not being aware of anything is *samadhi*. If feeling yourself pure and alert is not *samadhi*, then what is *samadhi*?

Many people who have studied Buddhism for a long time would be able to answer that *samadhi* is when you neither scatter in confusion nor sink down into oblivion. This is a theoretical description of *samadhi*, but what is it actually like not to scatter in confusion or sink down into oblivion? Tell me, so I can see if you know. If you say it is not like anything, then you are sunk in oblivion. If you say it is like something, then you are scattered in confusion. If you say you feel yourself sitting there as pure and clear as the blue sky, this is a realm of deluded thinking. You must really achieve the state where neither body nor mind remains, and you are as pure as the sky, immeasurable, and boundless, and neither scattered nor oblivious. If you can be like this, this can be called a true likeness: it is almost like *samadhi*.

People in general think that if they enter *samadhi* to some slight extent, then they will not be aware of anything at all. When you do sitting meditation when you are tired out, and get into a real state of not being aware, this is sleep, this is sinking down into oblivion. It is definitely not entering *samadhi*.

However, you should take note of the fact that true oblivion, true sleep, is also a form of *samadhi*. It is the *samadhi* of oblivion. Really. This is not a joke. Why is this? When you really know that you are sinking down into oblivion, this is *samadhi*: it is not called oblivion. When you do not know that you are sinking down into oblivion, then it *is* oblivion. There is a big difference here. When you are tired out and you enter into the *samadhi* of oblivion, this is not wrong at all. How can I say this? Buddha said there are hundreds and thousands of *samadhis*: the realms of *samadhi* are very numerous. Whether or not a certain realm is *samadhi* is a question of whether or not you are aware. However, this is called worldly *samadhi*. Worldly *samadhi* is stopping and resting. This includes the state of ordinary stopping and resting. When ordinary people do sitting meditation, it is almost always the case that they are in this state of stopping and resting: they do not have true *samadhi*.

When most people sit in meditation, they are there playing with states of knowing, or else playing with states of feeling. While they are busy fooling around with these two things, they think this is the Path. In fact, this is not the Path at all, because these two things are always changing, whereas the Path does not change. Things that cannot help changing according to the circumstances, the time, the time of day, physical capabilities, emotions, nutritional factors, and all sorts of other differences: these are not the Path, these are various kinds of experiential realms. Experiential realms are not the Path, they are configurations of false thought.

So then, what is real genuine *samadhi*? This is something you need to know. Thus we will be quoting shortly from *The Abhisamayalamkara Shastra* and *The Yogacarabhumi Shastra*. But now let us talk first about cultivating *samadhi*.

Cultivated *samadhi* is not the *samadhi* of enlightenment. There is a difference between them. A minute ago I mentioned that people studying Buddhism discover that false thoughts cannot be cut off. This is because we reverse cause and effect, and take what Buddha said as our own discovery. Then we want to seek realization of the realm of the buddhas. But we forget that after Shakyamuni Buddha left home he practiced austerities for twelve years, and underwent all kinds of experiences, before he realized that this was not right, and finally found something. Another example is Yuan-wu, who became gravely ill and virtually died before he finally recognized that he was wrong, and then was able to find something.

Buddha said: "False thoughts are fundamentally empty. Causal origination is unborn." How stupid we are, therefore, when we sit down to meditate and always want to empty out false thoughts! If false thoughts can be emptied out, then they are not false thoughts. Because they are fundamentally empty, Buddha has already told you that they are false. Since they are false, why are you still paying attention to them? Why are you there trying to empty them out? Even if you managed to empty out false thoughts, that realm of emptiness itself would be a big false thought, something in the realm of the skandha of conception. What's more, that realm of emptiness of yours would not be there anymore, it would change and go away, if you did not work on it or sit in meditation, so obviously it too is a false thought.

So when you recognize that false thoughts are fundamentally empty, when you sit down to meditate you are very relaxed. You do not have to find a way to get rid of false thoughts. If false thoughts were not really empty, when each false thought came, the other false thoughts would be blocked by it, and be unable to come. So false thoughts are fundamentally liable to run off. The Buddhist scriptures describe them as being like bubbles in water: one after another they bubble up then disappear. Why would you have to empty them? They are fundamentally empty: they do not need us to empty them. Thus, when we are doing meditation work, if we are there trying to empty false thoughts, we are doing the wrong thing all along. We end up like a little kid playing with a rubber ball in the water: whenever the kid pushes the ball under the water, the ball pops right back up somewhere else. If we spend all day long there pushing the ball under, tell me, how is this cultivating Zen? All we are doing is playing around pushing false thoughts down.

If we really do not try to suppress false thoughts, if we sit this way, then it will be very good. If you say false thoughts keep coming in an unbroken stream, that's right, they are never cut off. But they never stay there either. Even if you want to hold them back, you can't. In the midst of them, there is the one that knows the false thoughts are coming and going, and this one definitely does not run off along with them. If you recognize this one, then you can let false thoughts do as they please. You pay no attention to them, you just stay aware of your own "pure clarity within you." You know this one, and it is all right. How relaxing!

But why can't you become completely pure and clear? Why are there still false thoughts? In a previous lecture of the first half of this lecture series (see *Working Toward Enlightenment* published by Samuel Weiser, 1993). I mentioned this story. Anditya asked Manjushri: "If we clearly know the truth that birth is not born, why are we still revolving in birth and death?" The Bodhisattva Manjushri answered: "Because your power is not sufficient." It's the same principle here. Why can't we become pure and clear? Because our power is not sufficient.

A further question arises: so then, what is this "power?" We sit in meditation well enough by day. When false thoughts come, we are able to pay no attention to them, and we are pure and clear. But after we fall asleep, we become all confused as before. How can we explain this? Someone who studies Buddhism is a truly scientific person: he must resolve every question, he cannot be at a loss for an explanation.

So let us keep pressing our investigation further. There are two basic reasons for why false thoughts do not clarify out. One is a matter of physiological influences. The more unhealthy the body is, the more sickness and pain there is, the greater will be afflictions and false thoughts. So everything cannot only be a matter of mind: you must properly attune the four elements of your physical body.

Thus the theory of *ch'i* channels is very true. Moreover, it is present in all the Buddhist scriptures, though the Buddhist scriptures in general conceal things related to this aspect. It's just that we do not discover them when we read the scriptures: it's not that Buddha did not acknowledge them. As an instance, in many places where the scriptures mention "wind," they are referring to *ch'i*.

To answer our query we must turn to Yogacara philosophy which speaks of twenty-four kinds of phenomena that are not correlated with mind. Time, for example, is one of the things that belong in the category of phenomena that are not correlated with mind. Sometimes a person sits in meditation, and sits well, and passes three hours in what seems to him to be an instant. The outside world, however, is still going along minute by minute. Thus, there is no way for you to change the time of the universe. Space, and velocity (like the velocity of the planets) are also the same way: mind cannot change them. This is the first point.

The next point is this. The phenomena of form do not belong within the scope of mental phenomena. The phenomena of form are independently established. Still, within the phenomena of form, the sixth consciousness has "the forms which it projects upon phenomena." This must be discussed separately.

In this vein, we cannot say that everything is only mind. The phenomena that are not correlated with mind keep on operating forever, and even Buddha's supernatural powers cannot do anything about them. Why do we still study Buddhism in order to achieve enlightenment? In fact, this is just the Yogacara analysis. Don't be afraid of it. The twenty-four kinds of phenomena that are not correlated with mind refer to the places that the power of consciousness and its mental states cannot reach. The phenomena of form are independently established: they are established independently of classifications of consciousness and of mental states. However, their whole functioning is included within the Tathagata-garbha, the womb of the Tathagatas, the matrix of enlightenment, so in that sense they are

all only Mind, the one source of both the minds of sentient beings and material things. All of you must be clear about this principle.

Therefore, when all of you study Buddhism and cultivate practice, if you take the little bit of Buddhist theory you have been able to understand to explain the cultivation of practice, this becomes a blind view of mind-only, and you will not be able to work any transformations at all in relation to anything connected to the one source of mind and material things. You have to understand this if you want to be able to properly attune the four elements of your physical body.

Now let us return to investigating ourselves. When we sit and meditate, one part of the reason we cannot cut off afflictions and thoughts is physiological influences. What's more, these influences are almost absolutely decisive. A day comes when you are sitting very well, when you are pure and clear, when your complexion looks good, and you are in good spirits and happy, and your body is free from sickness. Have all of you had this experience? (The audience replies that they have.)

Well then, a question arises. Why can't you maintain this state forever? How is it that when you are tired out, or for other reasons, your emotional state can fall so low and vexations can arise? So ordinarily even if you attain a bit of a realm of clarity, and it seems to be an empty realm without thoughts, this is just a condition of the consciousness, nothing more. It is only a clearing of the sixth consciousness, and that's all. Even if you empty out past, present, and future, this, too, is only the realm of clear immediate awareness of the sixth consciousness. There is no physical transformation at all, and the seventh consciousness has not been transformed either. As for the seeds of habit in the eighth consciousness, the *alaya* consciousness, don't even talk about them. You still cannot transform the physical body one little bit.

After you have dwelled in this realm of purity and clarity for a long time, it is very easily transformed into a dried out, lifeless state. In your emotions you cannot feel happiness or pleasure, though you do not feel depressed either. There is no vitality, no *joie de vivre*, and you have entered the realm of dead-tree Zen. Furthermore, in this state your temper is very great, and you cannot tolerate the least little thing. Of course ideally you can repress yourself, but in this realm it is very easy to lose your temper. It's as if not a single speck of dust can be allowed to touch you. This realm, too, is a big false thought. This is a sick condition that people cultivating emptiness can easily get into.

This question of physical condition is even more serious for people who cultivate forms of being. Whether they chant mantras, or invoke the buddha-name, or guard the apertures, or perform other such practices, if they have sicknesses in any part of their bodies, these will erupt, and once they erupt, they will be impossible to deal with. At the same time, they will gradually develop nervous tension, because within them there is something that is busy, busily occupied holding to a thought. In reality, they will not be able to hold onto that thought, and they will do their utmost to hold it, and be fully occupied with it. Thus Chuang-tzu describes this as "galloping while sitting." Seen from the outside, such people are sitting in meditation but in reality, on the inside they are very busy holding a rally. People who cultivate these kinds of practices are even more busy than people in society. How many of these people can really let go? Do not deceive yourself about this. If your body is not absolutely healthy, once you develop nervous tension and confusion, then you are on your way to a condition of mental illness. For people in this kind of situation there are many repercussions in experiential states. For example, in their ears they may hear the sounds of people talking, or other such things.

The Buddhist scriptures record that many of Buddha's disciples killed themselves when their cultivation reached the realm of emptiness. They were all arhats, and they felt this held no interest. Sooner or later they all went the same way. Wouldn't it be better to go sooner? Thus, emptiness is not the ultimate: it is nothing but a state of mental transformation.

The experiential realms associated with transformation states achieved by cultivating forms of being are especially numerous—light shines forth, the earth moves. In years gone by on the mainland, there was an extremely famous Buddhist layman who lectured on *The Diamond Sutra* and advertised himself as a Zen man. In front of large assemblies he would demonstrate spiritual powers: he would extend his finger, and a ray of light would appear, with a guardian bodhisattva above it. Hey, it would be surprising if you did not bow down in homage when you saw this kind of manifestation.

Later I went to see him, and I said to him: "What? You call this Zen? Why don't you examine what you're doing? If you won't take this suggestion, I still want to ask you something. You lecture on *The Diamond Sutra*. Well, then, do you know that *The Diamond Sutra* says: 'If a person seeks me by means of form, or seeks me by means of sound,

this person is traveling a misguided path, and will not be able to perceive the Tathagata.' If you do these things to make a living, go right ahead, feel free. But don't say you are spreading the Buddha Dharma."

On the path of cultivating forms of being, it is easy to develop such problems. But don't just listen to me telling you that these are problems. I'm asking you right now, what causes these things? You say these are deluded paths, sicknesses. But try and see: Are you yourself able to accomplish such things? Naturally there are causes for these things.

No matter whether you cultivate emptiness or you cultivate forms of being, all these things are in the realm of consciousness, they are not the Path. All these things are explained in *The Yogacarabhumi Shastra* in the section on the stages of consciousness, and *The Surangama Sutra* explains them even more clearly. You must definitely study the fifty kinds of delusion associated with the skandhas first. The fifty kinds of delusion associated with the skandhas just speak of the basic principles, they do not explain the distinctive features. These forms of cultivation in the realm of consciousness have nothing at all to do with illuminating mind and seeing true nature, and even less to do with the fruit of the Path.

If you really want to seek the Path, the first thing you must do is master Buddhist principles, and especially the classic scriptures which we are quoting from in this series of lectures. *The Surangama Sutra*, *The Lotus Sutra*, and even *The Yogacarabhumi Shastra* that I am drawing from right now: you must clearly understand them all.

The Yogacarabhumi Shastra is the most important book explaining the sequence of steps for cultivating practice. In it the Bodhisattva Maitreya tells us, tells us most earnestly, about a step-by-step process of meditation work and the methods for cultivating realization. As you study it, you should also coordinate it with *The Abhisamayalamkara Shastra*, which discusses the four intensified practices.

The important point here can be expressed in one line: "Mind and material objects have one source." The crucial point of this is that our first necessary task is to properly attune the four elements of the physical body. If you want to seek the realm of *samadhi* and the realm of inherent emptiness without having the physical body properly attuned, these will be no more than illusory thoughts of the sixth consciousness. This is how serious the matter of properly attuning the physical body is in reality.

Only after properly attuning the four elements of the physical body will you be able to forget the body, and transform the sixth

consciousness, and reach the first step of being able to witness the emptiness of self and others. In the terms of the Zen School, only this is breaking through the elementary level of study, breaking through the first barrier. Without this, even if there is a chance manifestation of a bit of purity in your thought, this is only a condition of consciousness, you have definitely not yet experienced emptiness. You must be sure to pay attention to this point.

In order to properly attune the physical body, the first thing is the question of the precepts of discipline. We must therefore put special emphasis on the Hinayana precepts of discipline, especially how to get rid of lustful desires and cravings. If you want to get rid of lustful desires, the first thing to do is not let the elixir leak away. You see, the process for cultivating realization is scattered throughout the Buddhist scriptures, it is not built into a complete system. To find out these principles, you have to study widely and then put everything together.

Now the precept against lust is definitely not easy to live up to. If you can really fulfill it, then you will understand how to refine *ching* vitality and transform it into *ch'i* energy, how to refine *ch'i* energy and transform it into *shen* spirit, and how to refine *shen* spirit and return to *hsu* emptiness. This is the reason that after the late T'ang and the Five Dynasties period, the spiritual alchemy texts of Chinese Taoism were especially numerous. The Buddhists repudiated these as outside paths, and did not look at them at all. But in terms of the great realm of *The Hua-yen Sutra*, you cannot fail to look at these texts. Why were there so many Taoist spiritual alchemical texts? Because of their experience in cultivating meditative concentration, and their tendency to discuss *ch'i* channels. After you have understood this, you can look at Taoist things without going wrong.

There is one more point. The three channels and seven chakras talked about in Esoteric Buddhism, and the special meridians and eight channels talked about in Taoism are all phenomena that arise spontaneously in the realm of *samadhi*. After the ancients had informed us of their experiences and these phenomena, later generations of people again reversed the cause and the effect. When you sit and meditate, if you do your utmost to manipulate the *ch'i* channels, you are done for and you will destroy your nerves. So don't try to force an experience you have read about to manifest in your own practice. Everything proceeds naturally. The accounts of the ancients are correct: it is you who are mistaken.

4

AN OVERVIEW OF COSMIC REALMS

A student asked me: According to the Buddhist scriptures, the *devas* in the three realms of desire, form, and formlessness are also threatened by the catastrophes of water, fire, and wind. Thus there is certainly a very close relationship between the three catastrophes and the process of cultivating realization. Is there some necessary connection between this and the post T'ang and Sung Taoist concepts of refining vitality and transforming it into energy, refining energy and transform it into spirit, and transforming spirit and returning to emptiness?

The issue brought up by this student is very important. Those of us who study Buddhist doctrine generally split off its connections with cultivating realization. Because of this, some pursue Buddhist theory, some pursue the Buddha Dharma, and some pursue Buddhism as a religion. In reality, the three are one whole, but we tend to break it apart.

The Buddhist explanation of the connection between the celestial world of the *devas* and the world of human beings is superior to all the other religions, scientific theories, and philosophies in the world, at least up until now. The Buddhist worldview is expounded particularly well. In fact, the proofs sought by modern science are equivalent to adding footnotes to the Buddhist worldview.

Nevertheless, there are still some minor problems with this worldview. In terms of its geography, traditional Indian Buddhist cosmology speaks of four great continents surrounding a polar mountain, Mount Sumeru. The Hinayana explanation takes the Himalaya Mountains as the center of the world: Mount Sumeru is the Himalaya Mountains. However, this explanation has problems. In terms of the Hua-yen worldview, Mount Sumeru is a term for the Milky Way Galaxy, which is an explanation that is even more encompassing. It is very troublesome to discuss this point, but if we really want to discuss the Buddhist concept of seeing truth, we certainly must understand it.

In terms of the Buddhist system, within the universe, the worlds in solar systems are countless. The Earth, for instance, is one little world in our solar system. The heavens of the realm of form are already beyond the scope of this solar system. The formless realm is even farther from it, and even greater. As for the levels or heavens of the realm of desire, the lower level constitutes the realm of the animals: the realm of animals includes the living things of this world. The next lower level is the plane of hungry ghosts. Microbes, for instance, belong to the plane of hungry ghosts. Ghosts are not necessarily only the entities in transition between death and rebirth called the intermediate *yin* bodies; some are in the plane of hungry ghosts. The levels above the human plane in the realm of desire include the heavens of the four *deva*-kings, and so on according to typical Buddhist cosmology.

Now the center of the realm of desire is the Trayastrimsas Heaven, also called the Thirty-Three Heaven. Why is it called the Thirty-Three Heaven? Because it has thirty-three units, like an organization of allies. Some heavens have a lord, who rules all the *devas* there. Some are democracies, where all the *devas* are equal. In this particular heaven, there are thirty-three units.

If people want to be reborn in the heavenly realm of the *devas* after they die, they must cultivate merit and virtuous conduct. Strictly speaking, virtuous conduct and Zen *samadhi* are related. The Taoist concept takes the position that good deeds can give rise to *yang* and evil deeds can give rise to *yin*. Speaking only in terms of *dhyana* and *samadhi*, the four *dhyanas* and the eight *samadhis* are the road that must be traveled in order to ascend to the plane of the *devas*. The *devas* of the three realms (of desire, form, and formlessness) are arrayed very clearly upon it. If you cultivate *samadhi* to the point you reach the first *dhyana*, and coordinate this with the ten virtuous practices, you can ascend to certain heavens. It is the same from the second *dhyana* on up.

Nevertheless, this universe—including these heavens—can be destroyed. Here on Earth there will arise the three catastrophes and the eight difficulties causing destruction. Besides the catastrophes of water, fire, and wind, there will also be things like the disasters of weapons, pestilence, and scarcity (famine or dearth). *The Yogacarabhumi Shastra*, volume two, says this:

> The disaster of famine will commence when the human life span is limited to thirty years. At this time, pure food and drink will no longer be obtainable. They will stew rotten bones, and make a feast of them. If they get a morsel of grain, they will value it like a wish-granting gem, store it away, and guard it. All the sentient beings will have no energy or strength: they will collapse and fall to the ground like corpses, and be unable to get up again. Due to this famine and dearth, the species of sentient beings will be on the verge of extinction. This disaster of dearth will last for seven years and seven months and seven days and nights, and only then will it pass. The sentient beings who survive will gather together again, and arouse a low level of repugnance and detachment from the world. Due to this causal basis, their life spans will not contract further, and the disaster of dearth will stop.
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> When the human life span has been reduced to twenty years, the repugnance from these troubles that originally arose will recede. At that time there will be many plagues and pestilential miasmas, and disasters and untoward events and conflicts will arise one after another. The sentient beings who encounter all these sicknesses will almost all perish. This disaster of plagues will last for seven months and seven days and nights before it passes. The sentient beings who survive will gather together again, and arouse a medium level of repugnance and detachment from the world. Due to this causal basis, their life span will stop diminishing, and the disaster of pestilence will cease.
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> When the human life span has been reduced to ten years, the repugnance from these troubles that originally arose in beings will recede. At that time, the sentient beings will look back and forth at each other and fly into a murderous rage. Due to this causal basis, they will all take up whatever comes to hand, plants and tiles and stones, and make razor sharp weapons, and commence to slaughter each other, until almost all of them are dead. This disaster of weapons will last for seven days at most, before it passes.

When this world reaches the final state of the disaster of weapons, the human race of the whole Earth will be constantly engaged in war. Once a neutron bomb or equivalent has been used, all the plants in the whole world will become radioactive, and naturally they will be able to kill people. The shastra continues:

> At this time, the sentient beings will gather together again, and arouse a great feeling of repugnance and detachment from the world, and this will not diminish again. They will be able to abandon the evil things that have been reducing their life spans, and practice the good things which will add to their life spans. Due to this causal basis, their life spans, their physical powers, their wealth and happiness, and their freedom will all gradually increase again, until their life spans reach eighty thousand years.

After these disasters, the human race will repent, and do good things.

When the catastrophe of fire arrives, the Earth, the Sun, and the Moon will all be destroyed. The heat of the Sun will explode out, and burn everything up to the Mahabrahma Heaven at the upper level of the first *dhyana* heaven.

After the catastrophe of fire, the catastrophe of water will commence. *The Yogacarabhumi Shastra*, volume 2, says:

> What is the catastrophe of water? After the seven catastrophes of fire end, in the second *dhyana*, a concurrently born realm of water will arise, and destroy the world, the way water dissolves away salt. This realm of water will perish together with the world that contains sentient beings.

When the second catastrophe comes, the universe will turn into a river of ice, and then liquify again, all the way up to the highest level of the second *dhyana* heaven, the Abhasvara Heaven.

Buddha compared the distance from the heavens of the realm of form to our human world to the distance traveled by a stone falling into an abyss that takes twelve trillion years to hit bottom. This is how far the distance between them is. If you cultivate your work of meditative concentration to the point that you reach the third *dhyana* heaven, you will not be subject to the influences of the catastrophe of fire and the catastrophe of water. But you will still be afraid of the third great disaster—the catastrophe of wind. At that point the whole universe will be spontaneously vaporized, all the way up to the highest level of the third *dhyana* heaven, the Subhakvtsna Heaven. Only the fourth *dhyana* heaven will not be influenced by this. The fourth *dhyana* heaven is the purity when thoughts are abandoned. In terms of the realms of the *devas*, those in the fourth *dhyana* heaven are in the realm of form.

In terms of human existence, the fire catastrophe for humans is desire—sexual desire, craving, anger, and ignorance are all fire. No matter how good your meditative accomplishments are, once the pressure of desire is brought to bear, they crumble. Therefore, in the Buddhist scriptures it says: People for whom desire is a serious problem do not have *samadhi*, and do not attain liberation. In the end, they are burned up by the fire of desire, and totally destroyed. When Buddha was in the world, he had certain disciples who in the end went down this path. For example, some people collapse from high blood pressure or nervous breakdowns, and their whole bodies become feverish. This is a symptom of meditative concentration not being able to transform desire. This is a manifestation of the fire catastrophe in the human body.

The better people refine their meditation work, the higher their level of cultivation, the more quick tempered they become. For example, take the old monk who was my teacher in years gone by. He would not only get angry: once he lost his temper it would be terrible. Whenever one of his disciples made a little mistake, the whole temple, as big as Ts'ao-ch'i Temple is, would be ringing with his curses from one end to the other—he'd keep cursing and cursing in a loud voice. Certainly this was also his teaching method. But in general the more refined a person's cultivation becomes, the greater his anger when he loses his temper. This is also a case of "When the water is too pure, there are no fish": it has no room for any sediment. This is also an instance of the catastrophe of fire.

What about the catastrophe of water in human terms? It represents greed and craving. Craving and desire differ in degree. When the waters of craving multiply, it is very serious, extremely serious. Even the second *dhyana* cannot fend them off. In other words, no matter how good your meditation work is, if you cannot cut off that strand of feeling, when the catastrophe comes, your meditative concentration will crumble. How will the catastrophe come? There is no fixed time for it: when you encounter certain external conditions, it will arise based on them, and burst forth. There are many people whose cultivation of practice and meditative accomplishments are very good, but who are done for when certain causal conditions arise. This, too, is an important meditation point: study it well.

What is the disaster of wind in human terms? It represents the *ch'i*. That's why the Taoists and the Esoteric Buddhists advocate cultivating the *ch'i*. If you cannot reunite your *ch'i* channels with the source, if your breath is still moving in and out, then the third *dhyana* cannot be relied on.

A student once asked me: "When the breath stops moving in and out, there is still the feeling of the *ch'i* channels moving in the body. What is the reason for this? And when will this movement stop?" What he said is right. People in general only know how to talk about *ch'i* channels. They do not know that the *ch'i* and its channels are two separate things. When the *ch'i* stops and the channels stop moving, the *ch'i* in the body fills it up: only this can be called the *ch'i* stopping. Thus, when the feeling in the body is flowing, this is the channels moving. So, you must carry on your cultivation until the channels stop moving: only then will you be able to completely stop the elixir from leaking away. But accomplishing even this can only be called refining the *ching* vitality and transforming it into *ch'i* energy. As to whether or not this is the fourth *dhyana* state of purity where thoughts are abandoned, this is still a question.

If your mental state reaches the state of purity where thoughts are abandoned, have you already entered the emptiness of the reality of transcendental wisdom? This is another important question. We cannot assume that the state of purity where thoughts are abandoned is emptiness. The difference of order in these two is very different. Having the consciousness pure is definitely not emptiness. It is like the portion of the sky that an ant sees from its tunnel. This is certainly not the whole sky. Likewise, the sky that we see standing here in the city of Taipei is not the same as the sky seen from the peak of Kuan-yin Mountain. Naturally, when you go up into space and look at space, it is even more different.

When we study Buddhism, we know in theory that the four elements that comprise the physical body are all empty, but have you managed to reach this emptiness in your cultivation of realization or not? You have not been able to reach it, right? When your belly is hungry, you want to eat, and when your mouth is thirsty, you want to drink. Would you say that your mouth is dry, but you don't want to drink because the four elements are all empty? At this point, try to empty the four elements out so we can see if you are able to do it. Obviously you cannot empty them out. So when you say the four elements are all empty, this is the basic theory, but when you really want to cultivate practice to the point that the four elements are all empty, it will be impossible unless you can transform the four elements step-by-step through your practice.

With some people, as soon as their mental state becomes pure and clear, the physical pressure for sexual activity arises, or else the elixir leaks away. The better they perform their meditation work, the more this happens. This is because stillness belongs to *yin*, and after they have been still for a long time, *yin* culminates and *yang* is born. When *yang* can arise, the physical workings are reversed. Though this is reversal, if you cannot totally transform away earth, water, fire, and air, all they can do is run off following their natural power. If you can transform them, your practice and your meditation work will be pretty good. If you really want to cultivate this aspect of practice, Buddha has already explained it all in the scriptures. It's just that we cannot recognize this.

In Yogacara theory, there is a contrast between mental phenomena and the phenomena of form, a contrast between the material world and the psychological realm. In reality, both mind and objects are functions of the *alaya* consciousness. The *alaya* consciousness is not fundamental true nature: rather "it receives influences and holds the seeds and is the basis for the bodies (of sentient beings)." The four elements, and the phenomena of form, all have the same basis in the *alaya* consciousness. In terms of mental states, they are separate from them. For example, in our conscious minds, we can imagine flying into the sky: in the sixth consciousness, this is possible, but for our bodies it is not. Therefore we say that the physical body and the other phenomena of form are in contrast with mental states. But if we truly succeed in cultivating practice, they really can be transformed.

Next, the phenomena of form are divided into three kinds: micro-level form, macro-level form, and the form included in phenomena. From the standpoint of Buddhist consciousness-only theory, material culture is still in the category of micro-level form. Light waves can be called a macro-level form. The form included in phenomena refers to matter, though in Buddhist terms this is a transformation of mind. These three categories of form are three aspects of a single essence. They belong to the *alaya* consciousness, and are brought forth by the functioning of mind.

What are the forms included in phenomena? These are the forms which are contained in phenomena. What stands opposite phenomena is the conceptual mind. The objects of the mind are phenomena;

that is to say, the objects of the mind are everything within the scope of phenomena. For example, when we are dreaming, we have a body, and this body too is made up of the four elements. When we dream that we get hit, we feel pain as usual. This is a form born from phenomena. There are also the phenomena of form associated with the state between death and rebirth, the intermediate *yin* body: these, too, are forms included in phenomena. To tell the truth, these forms included in phenomena are the material accompaniment of the *alaya* consciousness. There is a distinction between real material accompaniments and false material accompaniments that we must recognize when we cultivate practice.

Thus, when we cultivate practice and sit in meditation, if we do not transform our physical bodies at all, how can we talk of the power of *samadhi*? That is *samadhi* power that has not materialized, an illusory figment of our conceptual minds. Thus, if you do a certain level of meditation work, you will have the proof of that level and the signs of that level. For this reason Buddha told his son Rahula to do the work of tempering the breath. He told him: "If you attain the mastery of the wind of the mind, then you will attain mastery of spiritual powers." In other words, if you really can attain *samadhi*, it is really incomparable bliss.

Some people experience a bit of purity by sitting in meditation, and immediately reckon that this must be emptiness. But they still have not gotten rid of the sensations of the body, and they are still in the pitch black bucket. They cannot leave this bucket of black lacquer. They have forgotten what *The Surangama Sutra* tells us right at the start: "[Sentient beings] do not realize that their physical bodies, and the mountains and rivers and space and the whole world outside themselves, are all things within wondrously illuminated true mind." Why do they hold onto this vacant emptiness, this irrelevant physical body?

There is another question here. The more you are able to empty out, the more that energy may turn around, and stay around your own body. What is the reason for this? Why is it that the better you sit in meditation, the stronger your bodily sensations become? Conversely, people who do not cultivate the Path at all will not have any bodily sensations. This is because the stronger the attitude of detachment from worldly things becomes, the stronger the mind that turns toward worldly things becomes. This follows the principle that when things reach an extreme, they must move back the other way.

Cultivating the Path is a science. There are such types of questions arising all the time. If you can answer one level, your cultivation of practice and meditation work advances to that level. If you cannot answer, then you cannot progress. Therefore, you should not read through the Buddhist scriptures in a confused way. The Buddha Dharma tells us everything, it's just that we have not yet comprehended it thoroughly.

The chart of the *devas* of the three realms has been distributed to everyone in the audience. It's as if we pointed it out to all of you, but no one paid any attention. The chart of the *devas* of the three realms is very important. The cultivation of practice associated with every level of every realm—the realm of desire, the realm of form, and the formless realm—has an absolutely crucial connection to our present cultivation of practice.

Now let us talk more about our human bodies. The human body is a microcosm of the universe. It, too, can be divided into three parts—a realm of desire, a realm of form, and a formless realm. The lower part of the human body is the realm of desire. The pleasure of the realm of desire is born from the vitality *ching*. If the vitality does not descend into the lower part of the body, this pleasure is not born, and the *ch'i* channels cannot open. But once the vitality descends, it cannot but leak out. How can you make the vitality descend without leaking out? This depends on meditation work. Maybe you don't want to listen, and you will make up your own "intelligent confusion," bandying around some theories of holding back the vitality, and using *yin* to repair *yang*, fooling around blindly. But the consequences of such "intelligent confusion" will be very serious.

The middle part of the human body is the realm of form. When you cultivate the breath until it fills you, being filled with breath you will not think of eating, and the light is sure to come: when you close your eyes, it's all light. But realms of delusion will come along with this. These are illusory forms within the light. At this point, if you think you have developed the power of supernatural seeing, you will be finished. Furthermore, if you hold onto the light, this is falling into the realm of form.

From between the eyebrows upwards is the area of the formless realm, where the whole body is empty, absolutely without false thoughts. Not having a bit of false thought is the formless realm. If you hold tight to the formless realm, it is like having no thought. You fall into the formless realm, and this, too, is not right.

If you hold to having no thoughts, you fall into the formless realm. If you hold to the realm of light, you fall into the realm of form. If you hold to pleasure, you fall into the realm of desire. Thus Esoteric Buddhism brings out bliss, illumination, and no-thought, and balances them equally. So this is how the cosmic realms match the levels of meditation, the physical body, and such teachings as *ching-ch'i-shen* (vitality-energy-spirit) or bliss, illumination and no-thought.

If you really want to study Buddhism and realize the Path, it is a matter of concentrating on cultivation. This is an absolutely world-transcending Dharma. By carrying out the vows of bodhisattvas, you can enter the world and you can transcend the world. This is a matter of mental activity. If you really and truly want to concentrate on seeking to cultivate realization, the only alternative is for you to have times when you absolutely abandon external entanglements and devote yourself totally to cultivation.

The average person merely talks about transforming the material body. In terms of physiology, this transformation will not be possible without more than ten years of concentrated cultivation, and even then only if you do not encounter any obstacles. The Taoists after the T'ang and Sung dynasties said: Shut yourself in for a hundred days, carry the embryo within you for ten months, nurse it with milk for three years, face the wall for nine years. To cope with the transformation of the material body, at least three years of concentrated cultivation is absolutely necessary, and during this time you must not encounter any adverse conditions. However, based on my own experience over several decades, there is almost no one who can properly lay the foundation of a hundred days of concentrated practice. The difficulty of cultivating practice is obvious.

The problem common to everyone is this: You clearly realize that the four elements are empty, but you cannot empty out your physical body. Whenever you encounter objects, you are always in a state of ignorance. It is as my teacher Mr. Yuan said: "The five skandhas are clearly illusory, but towards entangling objects I am always ignorant." Everyone makes this mistake. They keep talking of emptiness, but with every step they take they act as if things really exist. When you are sitting in meditation, as soon as you become aware of the *ch'i* channels, you are immediately dragged off by the sensations you feel. Purity is purity, to be sure, but in reality you are always playing with these sensations. In regard to this, the brilliant Wang Yang-ming said: "These people are all playing with the spirit." In the Buddhist scriptures they likewise call this "playing with the spirit." If you have not truly emptied out, as soon as sensations come, you forget about all your usual Buddhist learning.

Mahayana Buddhism tells us about three basic principles—not abiding anywhere, having no attachments, and having no expectations. When we begin meditating, we dwell completely in our own experiential realms: we cling to emptiness, we want to succeed in the Path, we want to realize the fruit of enlightenment. We use the mind that assumes there is something to attain to seek the fruit of enlightenment in which there is nothing attained, so of course we never succeed.

The Surangama Sutra tells us: "Inherent wind is truly empty, inherent emptiness is truly wind." The *ch'i* channels in the body are wind. Once you cling to them, you are finished. In later generations supposed knowledge multiplied more and more. There were theories about the special meridians and the eight channels, of the *yin* spirit and the *yang* spirit. All these ideas of seeking mystic marvels are poisonous. If you swallow this poison, you will abide in such ideas, and become attached to them. You can work at them all day long, but it will be utterly useless. Real *ch'i* channels allow no abiding and no attachment: you can reach them only after you are totally empty.

Speaking of this, let me read you a letter I received from a Chinese lady in America:

> Dear Teacher:
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> Respectful greetings. The commentary, *The Great Meaning of the Lankavatara Sutra,* explains very clearly that all forms of knowing and feeling are in the category of psychological conditions. I feel, however, that whatever the situation may be, I am only able to have no feelings: How can I manage to have no knowledge? By now I have already found "him." He is well beyond everything, without shape or form. All I can do is have a little bit of this in my conscious mind. Even though this is not at all right, I still believe it.
>
> When I read *The Great Meaning of the Lankavatara Sutra,* there are several questions I still must ask you to explain. Is the "body generated by will" what the Taoists call the "body within the body"? Is the body outside the body the double cultivation of essence and life? After we succeed in our work, it breaks out from the crown of the head: the body within the body is the so-called true person. It does not have to break

out through the crown of the head, it can be hidden or manifest at will. As the saying goes, when it scatters it becomes energy, when it gathers together it becomes physical form. Is the body generated by will like this?

When I am sitting in meditation and I empty out past, present, and future, I have no experiential realm of emptiness. I just feel that my mind is as broad as heaven and earth, so much so that it can contain heaven and earth. I cannot maintain this condition: when thoughts come, it immediately breaks up. When thoughts arise, although they do not stay, I cannot recover the equanimity and tranquility I had at first. Thus, in my remaining years, I will put waste products to productive use, and only ask about the plowing, not the harvest. Whether I succeed or fail I will leave to fate. Speaking truthfully, I do not want to become a Taoist immortal or a buddha. It's just that I am very afraid of reentering cyclic existence.

Right now I am studying the *Verse Guidelines for the Eight Consciousnesses.*

Respectfully,
(signed) Tao-an

This lady does not talk about *ch'i* channels. Sometimes it seems she wants to ask a question, but she always manages to know how to answer it herself. Her empowerment came from holding with all her might to *The Surangama Sutra.* I once told her that because we were so far apart, there was no way for me to give her timely guidance, so if she had any questions, she should look in *The Surangama Sutra.* When we do meditation work, we are frequently hemmed in by *ch'i* channels and experiential states. In *The Surangama Sutra* it says: "Inherent wind is truly empty, and inherent emptiness is truly wind," but none of you have tried to understand this directly.

In summary, if you want to escape the three catastrophes of fire, water, and wind, you must transform the physical body. It will be impossible to enter the realms of the *dhyanas* and the *samadhis,* unless you totally transform the body's four elements.

After a house has been covered with a good roof, what kind of thing will destroy it in the end? The wind may blow, the rain may beat down, the sun may blaze away at it, but nothing will damage

it. The inside of the human body is the same way. If the four elements are not properly attuned, you cannot be at peace and you certainly cannot achieve *samadhi.* This is because the illnesses brought on by the four elements when they are not properly attuned are indeed very numerous. You must pay particular attention to this.

Now let us look again at *The Yogacarabhumi Shastra,* volume 1. The heading reads: "Among the divisions of this level, the stage of conceptual mind, part one of the second section." Here "this level" means the basic essence of true thusness. Yogacara divides the whole essence of mind into eight forms of expression, so they are called the eight consciousnesses. In reality, they talk about one single mind-essence. Thus they call this the stage of conceptual mind among the divisions of this stage. Why is it called "the second section"? The first five consciousnesses are the first section, and the conceptual consciousness belongs to the second section.

The shastra continues: "We have already spoken of the level of the body of the five consciousnesses interacting [with the mind-ground]." The body of the five consciousnesses means the five consciousnesses associated with the eyes, ears, nose, mouth, tongue, and the body. These interact with the mind-ground.

The shastra asks: "What is the level of conceptual mind? This also has five forms which you must know." In other words, in this conceptual mind there are five manifestations which we must know about.

"They are called its inherent identity, its dependence, its linking with objects, its auxiliary function, and its making karma." Yogacara theory is scientific, and we must put it to use in our own work of seeking realization.

The shastra asks: "What is the inherent identity of the conceptual mind?" Yogacara texts often use this term "inherent identity." We are always seeing the term "without inherent identity" meaning that phenomena do not have any independent, eternally existing nature. When the average person sees the term "without inherent identity," he or she thinks that Yogacara is opposed to the idea that there exists an eternal unchanging basic essence. This is wrong. This mistake is due to a shortcoming in the vocabulary of written Chinese. In the phrase *wu-hsing* "without independent identity," the word *hsing* means nature or identity. It does not mean "true nature" as in the phrase *ming-hsin chien-hsing* "illuminating mind and seeing true nature."

Thus, when the shastra asks: "What is the inherent identity of the conceptual mind?" the phrase "inherent identity" refers to the intrinsic nature of conceptual mind. The meaning of this sentence is: What is the nature and function of the sixth consciousness, the conceptual mind? The Bodhisattva Maitreya (the Yogacara sage who is considered the author of this shastra) speaks of mind, intentionality, and discriminating consciousness as threefold.* Strictly speaking, these three all belong to the functioning of consciousness, they are the nature and function of consciousness itself.

So what is being called "mind" here? Mind, in the words of the shastra, means "the entity which all the seeds depend on and rest upon." It is like a mother who gives birth to ten children, each with a different character, way of thinking, temperament, and level of health. One factor in this is the added causal conditions that have been bequeathed to them; other factors are the seeds they themselves brought with them from past lives. If someone is born especially intelligent, this is because this portion of the seed nature from past lives preponderates. All the seeds follow along in cyclic existence: they are never cut off, and are linked to each other. In Yogacara, this capacity is called the functioning of mind.

The shastra says: "The entity which [all the seeds] depend on and rest upon, is able to hold them and receive them, and their differential ripenings are accommodated within it: this is the *alaya* consciousness." This, too, is talking about the functioning of mind. The first part describes what this capacity depends on and rests on, and how it exercises this function.

Thus, some people have an inborn fondness for reading. Some people do not like to read, and even if they are forced to read, it will not work, because their seed nature is not developed in this direction. Someone has said: "If you are only reading the book in this lifetime, it is already too late." There's a bit of truth in this. But you still must read books in this lifetime, and leave it for the lifetime to come to put it to use when you will be bringing along some seed nature for it.

The essential function of the mind is to hold and receive the seeds and hold onto this capacity forever. "Differential ripenings" are the results of karma, which ripen at different times in different places. Why did I turn into me and he turn into him? Each person's seed

* These terms here refer to the eighth, seventh, and sixth consciousnesses respectively.

nature is different. The workings of cause and effect through cyclic existence is called differential ripening.

If we put aside the words of the Bódhisattva Maitreya, what do we mean by mind? Here in China what we call mind is what the Confucian sage Zi-Si spoke of in *The Doctrine of the Mean*: "What Heaven has bestowed on us is called true nature, and following true nature is called the Path." That is, the fundamental nature that comes to us at birth, which is different in each person, is mind. We must refer this back to the functioning of the seeds in the eighth consciousness, the *alaya* consciousness.

So then, what is "intentionality"? In the words of the shastra: "It means the perpetually operating intentionality, the intentionality associated with the body of the six consciousnesses that is never interrupted or destroyed." This belongs in the category of intentionality. Intentionality is part of the triad of mind, intentionality, and discriminating consciousness. The ancestral teachers of the Zen School said that when you study meditation sayings, you must detach from mind, intentionality, and discriminating consciousness to study them, and only then will what you discover in your study be the truth of *prajna*, transcendental wisdom.

What we call conditions of consciousness are a person's way of thinking, the habitual configurations which he or she constructs. For instance, the patterns of consciousness can construct an occupational disease. A person used to being an official always talks with an official tone of voice. The person's consciousness has already constructed this pattern of psychological behavior. Another example would be a person who studies Buddhism who is apt to be chanting "Amitabha Buddha" no matter what he or she is doing: this, too, is something habitual constructed by a pattern of consciousness.

Here in this last passage the shastra speaks of the intentionality "perpetually operating." Psychological behavior always has a dependent character; this is the functioning of consciousness. "The body of the six consciousnesses" means the discriminating conceptual consciousness aroused by the first five consciousnesses. Intentionality is never interrupted or destroyed: it flows on like a stream.

What is "discriminating consciousness"? The shastra says: "It means the differentiating understanding that appears before you of the things you take as objects." Once anything comes before you, you do not have to deliberately distinguish it, you immediately recognize it clearly. This is the functioning of the discriminating consciousness.

The analysis made by the Bodhisattva Maitreya in this shastra is very refined. When we sit down to meditate, the instant we sit cross-legged, our mental state is very clear. But before long we are no longer at peace: Something begins to operate inside us. What is at work inside us is the functioning of mind, the functioning of the seed nature of the *alaya* consciousness. We must recognize this clearly.

What is the functioning of intent? The function of intent is the function that is aware when false thoughts have been purified, and knows this moment of purity. It is never interrupted or destroyed. The waves of false thought follow one another very closely, but they themselves do not know it. Therefore they cannot cut off diamond *prajna*. At this time, where is our discriminating consciousness? Once we sit cross-legged, for an instant it is very pure and clear, but then the functioning of mind starts, and mind naturally is able to accept this realm, and recognize this realm, and start trying to preserve it. Mind and intentionality both come, and then this functioning is present, and discriminating consciousness is present, too. This moment of clarity—this is discriminating consciousness.

People who study Zen without mastering the principles of Buddhism do not clearly differentiate among "mind," "intentionality," and "discriminating consciousness." They think that performing quiet sitting well is in itself meditation work. In fact, after you have mastered the principles of the teaching, you know that no matter how well you do quiet sitting, this is still being within a condition of consciousness. You must clearly recognize these three points. There are really so many precious teachings in the Buddhist scriptures!

The shastra says: "Then, following upon these functions, the wind of the karma of the body and the karma of speech begins turning." Our speech, and our bodily actions, are all the functioning of this energy. This is called *ch'i* in the Taoist explanation; in Buddhist terms it is "the wind of karma." This is born from the power of karma. It is connected to the power of wind among the four elements: thus the karma of the body and the karma of speech are this wind.

The Confucians say that the Path of learning is a matter of transforming the people's physical energy *ch'i-chih*. This physical energy is something real, it is not an empty theory. In other words, when your learning and cultivation reach a high level, your physical being can be totally transformed. Each step of the process has its own results and its own signs. There is no way to deceive yourself about this.

5

THE SEQUENCE FOR TRANSFORMING MIND AND BODY

We are now ready to explore the second major topic of this study: the actual methods of cultivating realization. If you want to cultivate realization by means of the Dharma Gate of the mind-ground, and advance to seek genuine enlightenment and awakening, the biggest barrier is the view of the body so this is what we'll address first.

Even though Buddhism says that the four elements which make up the physical body are all empty, this is said in reference to the Hinayana teaching that is not the ultimate truth. In terms of the teaching of ultimate truth, mind and material things have one source. The body, and the four elements which comprise it, are all constructed by a moment of karmic power. The primary reason why we cannot achieve results in our cultivation of realization is because we cannot transform the physical body which is constructed by the power of karma. Because of this, we cannot manage to be without false thoughts. Even though we get a little bit of pure clarity, this is only a chance temporary phenomenon of the sixth consciousness created by our stubborn grasping, it is not the ultimate. Overall, up to this moment the important point in these lectures has been right here.

A few lines from *The Complete Enlightenment Sutra* are very important for cultivating practice. They are the best route for following the Mahayana teaching, and they are also the most difficult: "Dwell in all places without arousing false thoughts, but do not try to put an end to or destroy false states of mind. When abiding in false thoughts, do not impose comprehension, and do not distinguish the real in this non-comprehension."

If you never arouse false thoughts, if you can "abruptly stop your false identity," you will succeed: "This stopping is enlightenment." But what does it mean, not to arouse false thoughts? If a person has no false thoughts, if he did not arouse any false thoughts at all, he would be like a block of wood, and this is definitely not the Buddhist Path. The sutra says: "Do not try to put an end to or destroy false states of mind." You should not strain yourself to use some

method to put a stop to or obliterate the false thoughts that spontaneously come. If you think of a method to obliterate the false thoughts that spontaneously come, this method you are imposing to obliterate them is itself a false thought. If you do not try to stop or obliterate them, they will spontaneously become pure and clear.

Thus, the sutra advances a step further and tells us: "When abiding in false thoughts, do not impose comprehension." The easiest mistake for us to make when we are doing meditation work is to add our comprehension to the realm of false thoughts. This is particularly true of people who have a bit of a basis in studying Buddhism: once false thoughts arise, they become afraid, and then they do their utmost to devise a way to get rid of false thoughts. They are always in the domain of comprehension. In fact, the one that clearly understands and knows is itself a big false thought. That's why Buddha tells us: when abiding in the realm of false thoughts, do not impose comprehension; they came spontaneously and they will go away spontaneously.

In the last line, Buddha tells us: "Do not distinguish the real in this non-comprehension." Supposing that we have reached this non-comprehension, and there is not a trace of understanding, and we have become peaceful and extinct, "Do not distinguish the real in this non-comprehension." When we reach such a realm, we do not need to seek affliction for ourselves, we must not keep asking ourselves: "Is this right or not? Or perhaps this is inert emptiness?" The best thing is not to keep discriminating.

There is another important point. The sutra says: "When you know illusion, you immediately detach from it, without using any other expedients." All false thoughts are illusory thoughts. When you recognize they are illusory thoughts, those illusory thoughts immediately depart: you do not need to use any other methods, like observing thought, refining the breath, and so on, to eliminate illusory thoughts. These methods themselves are illusory thoughts. Why? Because they are only there when you do meditation work, and absent when you don't. Thus, they cannot be relied upon.

The sutra says: "When you detach from illusion, you awaken immediately, without any gradual steps." When you know they are false thoughts, the false thoughts immediately flee. Nothing needs to be added to this: without being increased or decreased, the purity and clarity of peaceful extinction is the same as the true nature of awakening. In this there are no distinctions of first stage and second

stage, first *dhyana* and second *dhyana*. When you recognize this clearly, then you've succeeded.

When a person who has really recognized this clearly, and has a bit of perception of truth, starts to cultivate practice after this awakening, this finally counts as truly being engaged in cultivating practice. Therefore the Fifth Patriarch said to the Sixth Patriarch: "If you do not see fundamental nature, cultivating the Dharma will not benefit you."

When all of you do meditation work and cultivate practice without being able to attain *samadhi*, the first barrier is the view of the body. The second barrier is that you do not see truth clearly. The physical body is just a moment of thought. If you cannot transform the physical body, naturally you will not be able to succeed in attaining *samadhi*. This is the issue we will discuss.

Now let us return to *The Yogacarabhumi Shastra*, volume 2, "Among the divisions of this stage, the stage of conceptual mind," where part two of the second section says:

> As the newly conceived embryo gradually grows, name and form grow along with it, and both gradually enlarge. It grows like this until the period of dependency is complete. You must know that in this, by means of the element of earth, dependence produces form, and it gradually grows and enlarges. By means of the elements of water, it holds together without scattering. By means of the element of fire, it matures and solidifies. Without moistening, by means of the element of wind, the limbs divide and each takes its proper place.

The embryo is in the womb. If we talk in terms of the twelve links of interdependent causation, this is the link called "name"—the embryo. But what about the link called "form"? This refers to what is put together by earth, water, fire, and wind. The shastra says: "They all grow and increase equally, and all gradually expand and enlarge." The embryo matures harmoniously due to its components of earth, water, fire, and wind.

"It grows like this until the period of dependency is complete." The embryo, dependent on its mother's body, is fully developed after nine months, and is born.

"You must know that in this, by means of the element of earth, dependence produces form, and it gradually grows and enlarges. By

means of the element of water, it holds together without scattering. By means of the element of fire, it matures and solidifies. Without moistening, by means of the element of wind, the limbs divide and each takes its proper place." This passage describes the construction of the embryo by the four elements.

At the end of *The Surangama Sutra* there is this line: "Birth exists on the basis of consciousness, extinction comes from eliminating form." The first source of life is a moment of ignorance. After there is life, it divides into *yin* and *yang*, that is, mind and body. Now we must "become extinct," we must turn around and achieve enlightenment, in order to attain the fruit of nirvana, the fruit of peaceful extinction. First we must eliminate the barrier of the physical body composed of the four elements: only then can we speak of enlightenment.

How can we eliminate form? First we must recognize how the physical form is formed and grows starting with the formation and growth of the infant in the womb. We must also consider that the whole material world is the earth element. Human cells, tendons and bones and so on, are all functions of the earth element, whereas bodily fluids, saliva, hormones, and so on are the water element. For example, we depend on the circulation of blood for our survival: this is the water element. If it is in balance, there is no sickness; if it is out of balance, then we get sick. "By means of the element of fire," the shastra says, "it matures and solidifies." Held together by the power of the fire element, by the power of heat, our bodily functions grow and are nurtured. "It matures and solidifies" refers to the embryo becoming solid and taking shape.

The most important factor in life is the wind element. The first necessary condition determining whether or not we can attain *samadhi* is that we must attune the wind element in our bodies so it becomes light and peaceful. The opposite of light and peaceful is coarse and heavy. When we are doing meditation work and we feel the *ch'i* channels moving, this is being coarse and heavy. When we really open up the *ch'i* channels, then we reach the state where the entire body is light and peaceful and we spontaneously forget the body. Though the physical body composed of the four elements still exists, there is no trace of a feeling of any barrier. The key in this is the wind element: the wind element is most important.

The shastra also says: "As reckoned by sentient beings, time has no set measure." This means there is no such thing as absolute time.

For example, the exoteric teachings of Buddhism say that an ordinary person who wants to become a buddha must cultivate practice for a period of three great immeasurable eons, and does not acknowledge the theory that a person may become buddha in this present body. But the Esoteric School, and the Zen School, pay no attention at all to the issue of the number of eons it takes to become a buddha. *The Lankavatara Sutra* says: "The number of eons is not fixed." The time it takes for the progression through the ten stages of bodhisattvas is also not fixed. *The Yogacarabhumi Shastra* says: "The time [it takes to progress through the stages] is not set." Thus the number of eons is not rigidly set.

For example, when we are experiencing pain or hardship, one second may feel like a hundred years. When we are happy and at peace, a day passes like a second. The shastra says: "What is the reason [that time has no set measure]? Because sentient beings create all sorts of karma." Time is all in the mind. In every region of the cosmos, on every planet, the feeling each species of sentient beings has for the duration of time varies according to the force of their karma.

But how does this all relate to cultivating realization? When we study Buddhism and cultivate the Path, we always try to deal with the world-transcending Dharma with the mentality of worldly dharmas. First of all, when we sit in meditation, we cannot get away from the concept of time. We schedule a set period of time to sit in meditation, and we are rigidly controlled by time. If we do our meditation work well, and that night we cannot fall asleep, we think: "Oh-oh. I've got insomnia." If we cannot get free of the worldly ideas of time, space, and life, then how can we cultivate the Path? This is all the force of karma—the force of karma is hemming us in. That's the important point.

The shastra says: "Some pass through an eon, some pass through less, even as little as a single year." This expresses the relative nature of time.

"Then there is the eon of destruction, by three types of catastrophe. The first is the catastrophe of fire: it can destroy the world from the level of Avici Hell up to the Mahabrahma Heaven." When the catastrophe of fire comes, it starts from Avici Hell, and burns everything up to the border of the second *dhyana* heaven. So why does Buddha want us to cut off desires and get rid of lustful states of mind? It's because if we do not transform these, when the catastrophe of fire comes, we will be totally destroyed.

The awesome force of the second disaster, the catastrophe of water, is even stronger, and it will reach the second *dhyana* heaven. When we humans are filled with physical vitality, the fire of desires is set in motion. Later the barrier of the catastrophe of water arrives. Diseases like diabetes all belong in the category of the catastrophe of water at the level of the human body.

The third disaster is the catastrophe of wind. It can destroy everything from the highest point in the second *dhyana* heaven up to the border of the fourth *dhyana* heaven.

Our present topic is that there is a close connection between the three catastrophes which Buddha spoke of and the cultivation of practice in relation to earth, water, fire, and wind. You can see how everything starts to relate, but because of time limitations, we can only give a simple account of this topic.

The shastra continues: "After this, there is a great wheel of wind, equal in extent to the galaxy, that rises from below." This explains the formation of the world. You can study this alongside current geological theory, and it is very interesting.

Buddha says that after the empty eon (before this world exists), there are twenty eons of emptiness. Empty space is by no means nonexistent: empty space is something too, especially the empty space that contains the world. For example, outer space is a part of the material world. Thus, Buddha said that the material world has seven great elements: earth, water, fire, wind, empty space, awareness, and consciousness. In the period of the empty eon, the four elements of earth, water, fire, and wind have not yet taken shape. At that time, the functions of these four elements are contained in the element of space. In reality, the element of space itself is in motion, but because its motion is so large-scale, we feel instead that it is at rest. The *I Ching* refers to this when it says: "Heaven moves with strength." So we must realize that the universe is always in motion: if it stopped moving for an instant, heaven and earth would cease to exist and the whole universe would be destroyed.

The space element continues alone for twenty eons, and after that undergoes a transformation so that a flow of energy starts moving: This is the formation of the wind element, the wheel of wind mentioned in the shastra. After the wheel of wind has revolved for several hundreds of millions of years, it slowly spontaneously generates liquid, like a thick syrup. The wheel of wind and the liquid slowly rub together, and this produces heat. The thick liquid congeals together,

and the parts that stick up become high mountains, and the parts that sink down become valleys and rivers and seas. This produces the third level of earth, water, fire, and wind that comprises this world.

Now after they sit down to meditate, some people who cultivate the methods of the esoteric school visualize the element of space, and then they visualize this great wheel of primordial wind. It is like a great atmospheric layer. Then they visualize a wheel of fire on top of this great atmospheric layer, and on top of the wheel of fire they visualize a wheel of water, and on top of the wheel of water they visualize a wheel of earth. Then they visualize a giant lotus welling up from the wheel of earth and a bodhisattva sitting in the lotus. The bodhisattva is the mediator himself. This entire visualization must be achieved in an instant and its practice is an esoteric method. The reason you do it is so that after the visualization is perfected, you can cultivate cessation and contemplation. It's another method, related to what we're talking of here, for cultivating the path.

The shastra says: "Furthermore, those things that have form are born from consciousness." How are earth, water, fire, and wind and all that has form created? They are born from consciousness. Of course you yourself must go investigate and elaborate on why the material world is created by mind alone. The four elements are created by mind only: the function of the sixth consciousness in this is the most important.

In Dharma master Hsuan-tsang's *Verse Guidelines for the Eight Consciousnesses*, it says:

> The three natures [imaginary, dependent, and absolute]
> and the three awarenesses [erroneous, comparative, and immediate]
> pervade the three kinds of objects
> When the three realms revolve
> they are easily recognized.

The sixth consciousness extends through the three realms—the realm of desire, the realm of form, and the formless realm. When the three realms revolve, the central axis is the sixth consciousness. This is how strong the power of false thought is. The revolving of the three realms is entirely included within the boundaries of the sixth consciousness. *The Yogacarabhumi Shastra* includes the three realms, the nine stages, and the twenty-five forms of beings all in the stage of the sixth consciousness.

When we cultivate practice, if we do not have a clear view of this principle, whenever we want to empty out consciousness, it will be very difficult. The function of consciousness is very great: the three realms are all created by it. Thus the shastra says: "All that has form is born from consciousness."

When you understand this principle and apply it to your cultivation of practice and see emptiness, you can proceed onwards and cultivate the body generated by will, and you can ultimately succeed. The basic reason is here. Thus, when that lady in America found out for herself the body within the body and the body outside the body, it proved what Buddha said: even when there is no enlightened teacher present, the True Dharma is still there all the same.

Now according to the Buddhist categorization, the eating of sentient beings is divided into four kinds: eating at intervals, eating by contact, eating via thought, and eating via consciousness.

"Eating at intervals" means dividing up eating into meals, like the way humans distinguish breakfast, lunch, dinner. In some of the scriptures this is translated as "eating by grasping." For example, Westerners eat with knife and fork, Indians pick up the food in their hands, and animals use their claws—this is eating by touch. When the *devas* see us eating, it is with the same disgust that we feel when we see animals eating.

As for "eating by contact," an example is the way we breathe in air and take in light, besides our regular eating. This, too, is very important for maintaining life.

"Eating via thought" is spiritual. "Eating via consciousness" pertains to the *devas* in the realm of form and the formless realm. When you really attain *samadhi*, you do not need to eat anything. But before your meditation work reaches that level, you cannot confuse this matter, or else you will get sick. Anyway, we must remember these categories of eating in order to relate them to the maintenance and nurturance of physical form.

In *The Yogacarabhumi Shastra*, "Among the divisions of this stage, the stage of conceptual mind," part three of the second section says: "How can it be said that the great elements can give rise to the form that they create?" Each of the four great elements has its own seed nature. The wind element has the seed nature of the earth element. How can the seed natures of the four elements create the phenomena of form? The phenomena of form here are precisely our own physical being.

The shastra continues: "How can form be created by them, be established by them, be maintained by them, be grown and nurtured by them?" Dharma master Hsuan-tsang translated this shastra very well, reaching the highest standards of faithfulness and comprehension and being very logical. The four elements create form. Why is it that our lives, and even the material world, still depend after their creation on material functions to make them stay in existence, and not only stay in existence, but keep developing? What is the reason for this?

The shastra answers: "It is because all the great elements within us and outside us, and the seeds of the forms they create, all depend on the continuing mind within." Here is the key point in the principle that mind and material things have one source. The basic theoretical principle is right here. It depends on the four great elements within us and outside us.

What are the four elements inside us? Inside our bodies, the four elements continue in an unbroken process of the new replacing the old: these are the four elements inside us. When we sit in meditation and cultivate the Path, we set in motion the functioning of the four elements inside us, and we keep transforming them.

There are also the four elements of earth, water, fire, and wind outside us. For example, take sunlight and air. These two things have a single essence, but after they have taken shape and become manifest, a boundary is drawn between them. The functioning is the same, but the manifestation is different.

The four great elements, and the seeds of created forms they contain, all must depend on "the continuing mind within" in order to exercise all their functions. To help understand this, we can refer to an experiment that psychologists have performed: suppose an average person, no matter what age, is absolutely depressed, as depressed as he can be, so that he is stubbornly determined to die. In general, in about a half hour, that person will collapse. This is because "the continuing mind within" is no longer there, and cannot continue. On the other hand, even if the breath is cut off in a person whose life force is strong, if this person's life force is absolutely solid, and he or she full of faith, and the mental energy is solid and strong, this person can still be brought back. It all depends on whether this continuing mind within is solid or not.

The shastra continues: "Before the seeds of the elements have given birth to the elements, the seeds of the created forms will never be able to give birth to the created forms. Only when the elements are born, can the created forms be born from those seeds. Thus it is said

that the elements can give birth to the created forms." This passage is very important. When you read of emptiness in *The Diamond Sutra*, you must not think, "Oh, it's empty." The sutra says: "There is no mark of people, and no mark of self." This is easy to understand: here to there is no mark of people and no mark of self. But this is an analysis that should make us listen and extend it until we reach the level of the seeds of the elements, that is, the elements of the material world, and comprehend that before the seeds construct the shapes of the four great elements, the seeds of the created forms can never create forms. For example, only when flour and water are kneaded together can they turn into bread. If you just put the flour there, without adding water and mixing them both together, no bread can be made.

When Dharma master Hsuan-tsang translated this, it must have given him a terrible headache. There is no way to make scientific things into literature, but unless they are put in literary form, they really cannot be read. There are a lot of people who get a headache as soon as they look at Yogacara analysis: they cannot face it. This is because your minds are not fine enough. It is also because you have not attained *samadhi*.

Thus, the seeds can never create forms by themselves: they must rely on that to be born. What is "that"? This is like Zen master Lin-chi's statements on guest and host. "That" is the power of mind which they rely on. All kinds of internal and external material elements coordinate with spiritual functions: only this can create life.

Now that we have understood this basic principle, let us now turn back. If we take this karmic force of ours, and break through this present life, and return to that original place, then we will become buddha. "Birth exists because of consciousness, extinction comes from eliminating form" is this way. Thus cultivating practice is no simple matter.

To say our bodies are like little universes is a theory of the Taoists after the T'ang and Sung dynasties, and it has some truth to it. As we said before, the body can be divided into three parts. From the pit of the stomach downward to the feet is the realm of desire; from the pit of the stomach upward to the eyes pertains to the realm of form; from the eyebrows on up corresponds to the formless realm. Corresponding to this is the threefold process which the Taoists speak of as refining the vitality *ching* into energy *ch'i*, refining energy *ch'i* into spirit *shen*, and refining spirit *shen*, and returning to emptiness *hsu*.

Someone may ask: "You have already spoken of vitality and energy, but what about the methods and circumstances of refining the spirit? How does this match up with the four *dhyanas* and eight *samadhis*?" The answer is as follows: Vitality *ching*, energy *ch'i*, and spirit *shen* are categories of Chinese Taoism. These three are one single entity. Now, there is one point you must pay attention to. The Taoists after T'ang and Sung put special emphasis on the experience of cultivating realization, like the Esoteric Buddhists. Hence they really experienced such things as *ch'i* channels and bright points.

However, in later generations those who study Taoism and Esoteric Buddhism have committed the mistake of inverting cause and effect. Why so? Because the special meridians and the eight channels, the three channels and the seven chakras, are spontaneous transformations that occur after meditative concentration is perfected. The Taoist adepts and Esoteric Buddhist masters recorded the course of these transformations which they had actually experienced, and these became the classics of spiritual alchemy and the other Taoist books and the esoteric teachings of Buddhism. But people in later generations subsequently took these accounts as messages from higher authorities without really understanding them. They therefore made every effort to fabricate some semblance of vitality, energy, and spirit to match the records others left and fooled around with the special meridians and the eight channels. Thus, in terms of genuine realization, they were finished. Therefore, the ancestral teachers were not wrong: the error lies in us. In the same way, when the Zen masters spoke of illuminating mind and seeing true nature, everyone was there seeking mind and seeking true nature, but they got it all wrong. This all happens for the same reason.

Thus, [when the Taoists talk of] refining vitality *ching*, energy *ch'i*, and spirit *shen*, this is talk based on experience. Ultimately, how does human life come about? What are vitality, energy, and spirit? To use modern terminology to make a comparison, they are akin to light, heat, and force. Vitality *ching* is heat, spirit *shen* is light, and energy *ch'i* is force. Not a single one of them can be lacking. For instance if there were no Sun in our world, we would be finished. Spirit *shen* is like the light of the Sun. Spirit *shen* can engender energy *ch'i*. This is akin to when the light of the Sun shines on the earth. By a natural process the light is absorbed into the earth, then radiated out again to form clouds and mists. This is the same principle as transforming spirit *shen* into energy *ch'i*, and energy *ch'i* into vitality *ching*.

The average person transforms spirit *shen* into energy *ch'i*, and energy *ch'i* into vitality *ching*, then lets the vitality leak away. Letting

it leak away is not wrong: it is following the natural tendency. Nevertheless, because of this the average person sinks down forever into cyclical existence.

Reversing this process means not letting vitality *ching* leak away. If you turn it back, and align it again with energy *ch'i*, and with spirit *shen*, then you will succeed in cultivation. Such is the original principle.

Speaking about the original Zen transmission when Buddha held up a flower and Kashyapa smiled slightly in recognition can reveal a secret here. Let's look at flowers and other plants. How do flowers bloom? When the plant sets fruit after the flowers have bloomed, how do they form and grow? It is almost the same as the human body. Plants take in nutrition, and they too have their layers of vitality *ching*, energy *ch'i*, and spirit *shen*. They slowly grow, and after they have grown they bloom. When their flowers bloom, plants have reached the peak condition of their life cycle, and another life starts—they set fruit. This other life also has within it its own seeds. This seed nature must also be matched with other causal conditions, and then it, too, will grow into another plant, bloom, and produce fruit. In this manner, life after life continues forever without ending.

The Taoist adept Chang San-feng likened our lives to "trees without roots." But in reality, our lives do have roots. Empty space is our earth, and the head is our root. The brain of the ordinary man secretes hormones which descend to influence the sexual glands. When the sexual glands secrete hormones, the vital energy becomes very aroused, and semen will be ejaculated; once it is ejaculated, it's finished.

Therefore, not only Taoists, but all men who are traveling the road of cultivating practice know that "returning the *ching* (which means both semen and vitality) to repair the brain" promotes longevity without aging.

In Esoteric Buddhism, the chakra in the brain is called the chakra of great bliss. The chakra in the region below the navel, known as "the field of elixir," is called the transformation chakra. The chakra in the middle of the breast is called the Dharma chakra. The chakra in the throat is called the chakra of receiving the use of enlightened nature. If the chakra in the brain is not opened, then you cannot attain lightness and peace, and you cannot generate bliss. And because you cannot do this, when you sit in meditation, you will always look sad and forlorn, and basically you will not be able to empty out.

When the chakras are about to genuinely open, there can be incomparable pain. I have personally experienced this pain: when it reaches the eyes, it feels as if they are being stabbed; when it reaches the teeth, it feels as if they are being pulled out; when it reaches the ears, it feels like an earache. In the old days, before the Second Patriarch went to see Bodhidharma, his head hurt so much it felt as if it was about to split open. He couldn't stand it and wanted to die. A voice in empty space told him: "Endure it for a while: you are in the process of switching your skull bone." After awhile, his head did not hurt anymore, but five bumps grew on his head, like the five holy mountains.

When the chakra in the head is about to open up, it is extremely painful. Actually it is quite hellish. When the pain reaches the eyes, they go blind; when it reaches the ears, they go deaf. Wherever the pain goes, sickness arises there. If you add to this the slightest false thought of doing meditation work, it is inevitable that everything will be spoiled. All you can do is not let it affect you psychologically, and let the natural functioning run its course. When the *ch'i* channels have finally opened, everything will be all right.

Only when a person has really opened up the chakra in the brain does he or she understand what the chakra of great bliss means. Only then can he or she talk of refining energy *ch'i* and transforming it into spirit *shen*. At this point, the body generated by will comes out: the person achieves both the body within the body and the body outside the body. As soon as the thoughts move, they come forth. The wondrous function of spiritual powers is spontaneously there.

But is this connected with perfect complete enlightenment? No! This is just a type of karmic reward body. But there is a relation between this and enlightenment. This is part of the karmic reward body, and here there really is the distinction between the *yin* spirit and the *yang* spirit. The *yin* spirit exists within your own realm of experience, and other people cannot see it. When, through cultivation, you have formed the *yang* spirit, if you want to change into two or three replicas of yourself so other people can see them, then the other people will be able to see them. These replicas can talk, and they can touch things: this is the achievement of the transformation body, the *nirmanakaya-buddha*.

When you have reached this level of achievement, have you realized enlightenment or not? Still not yet. However, at this stage, as your thoughts move, there will be thousands and millions of trans-

formation bodies. When your thoughts do not move, there will be pure clear perfect illumination, without a single thing at all. Of course, in respect to seeing truth, it is very possible that you have penetrated through to great enlightenment. But what refining the vitality *ching* and transforming it into energy *ch'i* is about is meditation work, and meditation work and seeing truth are two different things.

In studying Buddhism and cultivating practice, you must cultivate to the point that you perfect all three buddha-bodies. This is the objective of this course of lectures. It is not the average person's lip-service Zen that you can find in the popular books and lecture halls. I've told you many times that Zen is not the solution of some *koan* or meditation saying. To learn Buddhism and learn the Path is a matter of genuine realization, experiential proof. You may be able to talk theory well enough, but this is useless.

In refining energy *ch'i* and transforming it into spirit *shen*, what is referred to as energy [in Chinese *ch'i*] is not the breath moving in and out [also called *ch'i* in Chinese]. The Esoteric Buddhist categorization is correct: first cultivate the breath, and then cultivate the blood vessels. At the beginning it is called the breath, as in the mindfulness of the breath moving in and out in the ten forms of mindfulness. After this temporal breath moving in and out has stopped, the blood is still circulating, and the blood vessels have not yet stopped. When these vessels have all stopped, this is the phase of "vitality transforming into energy." Only at this point can you cultivate the body outside the body.

As for the question of how to match up the four *dhyanas* and the eight *samadhis* to vitality *ching*, energy *ch'i*, and spirit *shen*: the four *dhyanas* are a sequence of four states of meditative concentration. The eight *samadhis* are not necessarily a sequence of steps that come after the four *dhyanas*. In the first *dhyana* you can also reach "the *samadhi* of boundless space" [traditionally counted as the fifth *samadhi* and said to come after the fourth *dhyana*]. For example, Zen master Ling-yun was enlightened when he suddenly looked at a peach blossom, and Zen master Tung-shan described his enlightenment as "Far away, separate from me," and had forgotten his self. These are both instances of the realm of boundless space.

Everyone has had a taste of this experience to some extent: sometimes the blind cat bumps into the dead rat and collides with it. At this moment you want to take this realm and stabilize it, but you cannot stabilize it. You have the experiential realm

of empty space, but you do not yet have the stabilizing power of the first *dhyana*, so you cannot stabilize it.

"The *samadhi* of boundless space" is the realm of emptiness. You may be able to reach an infinite boundless realm, but if you do not have the foundation of the first *dhyana*, you will not be able to stabilize it. There is no relationship of definite sequence between the four *dhyanas* and the eight *samadhis*. They shuttle back and forth like the eight trigrams. It cannot be said for certain that someone who has attained the first *dhyana* will at one stroke experience "the *samadhi* that is neither thought nor not-thought." Thus Zen master Yun-men said: "How many people do you think fall back from the heaven that is not not-thought?" These are true words. When people who have awakened sit down to meditate, sometimes they are in the realm of an ordinary person's *samadhi*, and sometimes they are in the realm of "the *samadhi* that is neither thought nor not-thought, and sometimes they are in the realm of "the *samadhi* of boundless space. " These are always shuttling back and forth: there is no fixed pattern.

So how can the four *dhyanas* be matched up with refining vitality *ching* into energy *ch'i*, refining energy *ch'i* into spirit *shen*, and refining spirit *shen* and returning to emptiness *hsu*? The important points are these.

In the first *dhyana*, you definitely must manage not to let the elixir leak away: only then will you be able to refine vitality *ching* and transform it into energy *ch'i*.

In the second *dhyana*, you must manage to refine energy *ch'i* and transform it into spirit *shen*.

In the third *dhyana* you must succeed in refining spirit *shen* and returning to emptiness *hsu*.

In the fourth *dhyana* you abandon thoughts and become pure and clear, so everything is empty.

This is a broad outline of the basic principles. In the detailed steps of the process of cultivating these, who knows how much suffering you will have to pass through? For example, when the *ch'i* reaches the eyes, the eyes will no longer be able to see. You must manage not to be concerned with this, or at least to let them be blind for the time being. With a moment of emptiness, the *ch'i* channels will spontaneously open. If you become afraid when the blindness comes, and cry out, "How terrible! My eyes cannot see!" by adding on this false thought, you will make things very troublesome. So cultivating practice is not that simple.

In sum, it will be impossible to do these things without concentrated practice. You must make cultivating the Path an integral part of your whole life in order to succeed. Instead, most people take studying Buddhism as a decorative trimming for their lives, embellishing them a bit here and there, and no more. It's like going to church on Sundays, and forgetting about it the rest of the week. How can you succeed like this? There is nothing in the world that is as convenient as that.

Ordinary people and people outside the Buddhist Path have no way to enter the heart of the genuine *dhyana* heavens without cultivation practice. Strictly speaking, ordinary people in the three realms of desire, form, and formlessness can all go to the heavenly plane, and can all be reborn there. Ascending to the heavenly plane does not necessarily depend on *dhyana* and *samadhi*. Going to the outer periphery of the heavenly realms depends on a virtuous mind and virtuous conduct. Thus, people who are good definitely go to heaven, but it is very likely that they will ascend only to the outer reaches of heaven. The same is true for people outside the Buddhist Path. This is because all the outside paths and the True Path have one point in common: that is, they urge people to turn toward the good. If they urged people to do evil, they would be called demonic paths, and that's not worth talking about.

Here we are talking about the four *dhyanas* but we should ask why we should make *dhyana* and *samadhi* the standard? Why don't we make virtuous conduct the standard? The reason is because people who sincerely do good probably have "ordinary person Zen." Their mental state is sure to be relatively pure already. In the terms of Chinese culture, a virtuous mind engenders *yang* (the positive energy), whereas misguided thoughts generate *yin* (the negative energy), and so bring affliction. Since the realm of the *devas* is compared to *dhyana* and *samadhi*, these include being good, but there are many classic texts that do not mention *dhyana* and *samadhi* when they speak of ascending to heaven by the path of being good.

Connected to this is an issue you must pay careful attention to. Even if through cultivation you reach the realms of the four *dhyanas* and the eight *samadhis*, in terms of Mahayana Buddhism, you are still only "a great ordinary person." You are very great, but that's all. By the same principle, there are some arhats who definitely have not realized supreme perfect enlightenment, even though through cultivation they have reached the four *dhyanas* and eight *samadhis*.

In regard to this aspect of cultivating the Dharma, the esoteric teaching has explained matters very well. If the vitality does not descend, bliss is not born. If the *ch'i* channels do not open, false thoughts cannot be cut off, and the body cannot be in good shape. But once the vitality descends, it is impossible for ordinary people not to let it leak away. If the vitality descends without leaking away, then it engenders bliss; then there will truly be a feeling of comfort beyond compare. But the realm of hankering after bliss means falling into the realm of desire. If you persist for a long time in coveting the bodily pleasures of the joining of *yin* and *yang* (in sexual intercourse), then you will fall into the plane of existence of such animals as ducks and monkeys and deer in whom desire is particularly intense. In that case, no matter how much you cultivate practice, you will still go off into the animal plane.

If the *ch'i* is not transformed, the light will not arise either. Only after the *ch'i* is stabilized will the light come forth. This is the inherent light within the physical body composed of the four elements. The spirit is made pure and illuminating by having no thoughts. But if you one-sidedly emphasize having no thoughts, and the realm of emptiness, you fall into the formless realm. Then when you have received all the rewards of the heavens of the formless realm, and they are over and done with, you will reenter cyclical existence as before. Of course, time in the heavens of the formless realm is very elongated. Millions of years in our world are no more than a few days there. Yet this, too, is relative: in terms of the individual experience of those in the heavens of the formless realm, it does not feel long.

If you are partial to realms of bliss, then you fall into the realm of desire. If you are partial to realms of light, then you fall into the realm of form. If you are partial to realms of emptiness, then you fall into the formless realm. If you want to leap beyond the three realms, and no longer remain in among the five elements, you cannot be partial to any of the three realms. This will be impossible unless you realize supreme perfect enlightenment. If not, you cannot leap out of the three realms. The four *dhyanas* and the eight *samadhis* and the nine steps of meditative concentration are the basis of cultivating practice in Buddhism and in all the inside and outside paths. If you do not travel this road, you cannot experience the fruit of enlightenment. But if you reach the four *dhyanas* and the eight *samadhis* without attaining *bodhi* and without penetrating through to *prajna*, without complete enlightenment, then you will still be a "great ordinary person." An arhat is

nothing more than a great ordinary person. The great arhats are different: they can leap beyond the three realms.

As men and women in the realm of desire, desire in the broad sense means desire for form, sound, scent, taste, and touch; desire in the narrow sense means desire for smiles, attention, contacts, embraces, touches. Among the four elements, these five desires unduly emphasize water and fire. Correlating this with concepts from Chinese culture, fire and water are linked with the heart and kidney meridians: the heart is fire and the kidneys are water. You must understand the conceptual system of the five elements which runs through Chinese medicine and many branches of Taoism. Then you can understand how it is reasonable when the Taoists teach people to join *k'an* (the trigram that represents water) and *li* (the trigram that represents fire).

If you study human physiology you will also know that when desire appears the four elements are all in motion, and are all sustaining damage. The Buddhist scriptures term this the catastrophe of fire and water to designate these functions. In reality, with any thought or movement, the four elements can all go into motion and not return to their proper positions. Why can't the human body attain stability? Because the four elements do not return to their proper positions, because they are not all in balance.

The Yogacarabhumi Shastra, volume 3, section three of the second part on the stage of conceptual mind, says:

> Next, in the aggregations of all the various forms, there are fourteen things: [the four elements:] earth, water, fire, wind; [the five sense objects:] form, sound, scent, taste, and touch; and [the five sense faculties]: eyes, ears, nose, tongue and body. Apart from these are the forms compounded by the conceptual mind.

The phenomena of form are earth, water, fire, and wind, and these encompass physical existence. The Bodhisattva Maitreya explains that, in simple terms, there are fourteen kinds of manifestations. In other words, there are fourteen kinds of functions. Earth, water, fire, wind, form, sound, scent, taste, touch and the five sense faculties, eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body, are all in the category of aggregations of the phenomena of form. These cohere to form the configurations of the material world, and are called aggregations of form.

(The great seeds, the four great elements, the aggregations of form—each term has its own scope. When you study Yogacara theory, you find that it is very logical—not a single point can be wrong.)

The forms compounded by the conceptual mind are excluded from this category. For example, the forms included in phenomena are the forms compounded by the conceptual mind. When we dream that we are being burned by fire, the body we have in the dream can feel the burn. When we drink cold water in a dream, it can feel the cold. Earth, water, fire, and wind, and form, sound, scent, taste, and touch are all there as usual. These are the forms that are manifested by the contact of phenomena with the conceptual mind. If you understand this, then you will understand that after death the soul likewise has a world. When it goes to hell, it feels pain in the same way as this: hell is false, but one can feel pain there just the same. Here is another experiment. Cover your eyes, and take an artificial fire and pretend to burn yourself. You are sure to yell out that it burns, and your skin will get all red. This is a form compounded by the conceptual mind. It is one kind of mental state.

Volume 13 of *The Yogacarabhumi Shastra* contains the seventh section, titled "The fundamental ground is not the stage of *samahita*."

There is a phrase that they always use in the Zen School—"the scenery of the fundamental ground." The inherent nature of true thusness is the fundamental ground. This is said in regard to the aspect of fundamental true nature functioning. If you understand the functioning, then you will know the essence. *Samahita* means the equanimity brought about by meditative concentration. In the past, the old translations used the Chinese terms *san-mei* and *cheng-shou*, the same terms for this concept that they used to translate *samadhi*. But Dharma master Hsuan-tsang felt that this concept of *samahita* was untranslatable, so he used a transliteration. It means reaching the realm that we must reach; in simple terms, attaining *samadhi*. Here the shastra is telling us that, whatever we call it, the fundamental ground is not *samadhi*. This is very important.

The Bodhisattva Maitreya sums up the realms that are not *samadhi* into twelve types. The shastra says: "Because some of them are by nature not stable, they are called stages that are not *samadhi*, meaning the body of the five consciousnesses." Here when he says "by nature not stable" this is not the inherent true nature referred to in the formula "illuminating mind and seeing true nature." This means that by nature they are not stable, and are moving, so these

stages are not called attaining *samadhi* [which means stable meditative concentration]. As for "the body of the five consciousnesses," the functions behind the five sense organs are the five consciousnesses.

We mistakenly accept conditions manifested by the five consciousnesses as attaining *samadhi*, but these conditions are not *samadhi*, and we must not get this wrong. For example, some people chant mantras, and think that they have attained *samadhi*. But in fact, as they recite the mantra phrase after phrase, they are always in a state of movement and not stabilized, so this is by no means *samadhi*. This is one instance of this.

Another example is when we hear sounds, and feel we have thereby attained *samadhi*. This is the unstable nature of the ear-consciousness becoming pure and clear by chance: it is also not *samadhi*. If you think you have attained *samadhi*, "you are either deluded or crazy." Why? Because the nature of the five consciousnesses is unstable.

Another example is the following. When your eyes see the light, and you have a certain realm of awareness, it seems you have attained *samadhi*, but this is not real, because this in itself is a phenomenon that is born and perishes. Of course you have not attained *samadhi*. If you achieve something by cultivating phenomena that are born and perish, it is something that is not *samadhi*. You must recognize this clearly.

The shastra says: "Some of them are said not to be *samadhi* because they lack ease and peace. This means that the realm of desire is binding these mental states and mental objects. Even though these mental states and mental objects have the character of the mind being unified, nevertheless, they have no ease and peace and they involve nurturing and developing [the seeds of karma], so they are not called *samadhi*."

One necessary condition for *samadhi* is that there must be ease and peace. If you still feel your legs are there, or your head is there, if you still feel your shoulders aching, then this is not ease and peace, it is not peace and bliss. If your whole body is coarse and heavy, then you have not attained *samadhi*. When you have really attained *samadhi*, as you're sitting there you feel as if you are soaring up into space. That's how peaceful it is. Of course this is only a comparison. However, your body can only become peaceful and at ease when the three channels and the seven chakras are all opened.

We often work at meditating for quite a while, but we still have the feeling that there is some kind of mass rally going on there inside of us. The *ch'i* reaches a certain place, and we want to make it pass through, but the more we try the more stuck it gets. If we could really let go and empty out, and forget our feelings, then the *ch'i* would pass through. If we make every effort there to take charge of it, it will never be able to pass through in ten thousand years. The Bodhisattva Maitreya says that in this case we are being hemmed in by habits of the realm of desire. The habits of the realm of desire are very numerous. Desires for sensory experience, craving, anger, ignorance, arrogance, doubts, desires for wealth and sex and fame and food and sleep: these are all habits of the realm of desire.

Mental states and mental objects are a single whole, and the eight consciousnesses are all here in this. Mental objects are portions of consciousness. What are the mental objects of the realm of desire? If you feel that when the *ch'i* channels have opened, you will then be able to attain enlightenment, this is a terrible idea. This idea can trap us completely. All the psychological states of mind, including the eighth consciousness, are all within the scope of "mental objects." This includes the conditions created by the mind in the sixth consciousness. Even though sometimes we can attain a very stable state, this is not true *samadhi*.

"The mind being unified" is the basic realm of *samadhi*, but even in this state it is not certain that you will attain ease and peace. For example, when people who like listening to music become intoxicated listening to a good piece of music, this is a kind of *samadhi*. For people who like to clean out their ears, when they are doing so, this, too, is a kind of *samadhi*. It is also a kind of *samadhi* when people who like to rub their feet scratch a place that itches, and they have no false thoughts at all as they concentrate on scratching the itch. All these are instances of the mind being unified.

Thus, in the realm of desire you can attain the state where the mind is unified, but without ease and peace to nourish it, your body will get stiff there. The Bodhisattva Maitreya says that this is not the true realm of *samadhi*, which is a valuable lesson we must take to heart.

6

SAMADHI AND THE REALMS RESEMBLING *SAMADHI*

To continue with what I was explaining earlier—*The Yogacarabhumi Shastra's* stage of not *samahita*—when we can first recognize what is not the realm of *samadhi*, only then will we be able to understand what *samadhi* actually is. As mentioned in this passage from the shastra cited earlier: "Because they lack ease and peace, and still contain and nourish and develop [the seeds of karma], these states are not called *samadhi.*" What experiential realms allow us to gain ease and peace? The great Tibetan teacher Tsongkhapa said that when a pure cool feeling is generated on the crown of the head, it is the precursor to the state of ease and peace. It pours straight down from the crown of the head, and then extends throughout the whole body. All this is in the category of the precursor of ease and peace. No matter what school of Buddhism you cultivate, this is a manifestation that is sure to occur. However, this ease and peace that moves from the top down is easily lost, and sometimes it can completely disintegrate. What is not easily lost is the power that arises from the arches of the feet, and rises from the bottom up. This is what the Taoists call opening the *jen-mai* and *tu-mai* channels, and what the Esoteric Buddhists call opening the left and right channels.

So what is ease and peace? It means the state where the barriers of the body's coarseness and heaviness are no longer there, where there is no sensation of the body, where the obstructions of the body do not exist anywhere at anytime, and the feeling of a light and lively quality peaks. It is like an infant lying there, who does not know he or she has a body. The realm of ease and peace includes all the studies of the energy channels in Taoism and Esoteric Buddhism.

The shastra says: "Some states, because they do not generate the inclination [for the Path], are said not to be the stage of *samadhi.* Those with fond desires give rise to deep defilements and attachments toward all desires, and are always experiencing them."

Another reason for not attaining *samadhi* is because you fundamentally do not have the will to generate the genuine intention to

cultivate the Path and realize the fruit of enlightenment. People who do not have this inclination for cultivating the Path cannot reach the realm of *samadhi*. This happens because we take cultivating the Path as one small part of our lives, as a game to play and no more. People who truly cultivate practice make cultivating practice their whole lives. For them, the whole of ordinary life is no more than a bit of a balancing supplement for their cultivation of practice. But for us, it is precisely the opposite. We want all possible worldly fame and wealth and status, and after all that, we also want to become buddhas. Our greed is very great, and we cannot manage to abandon it to concentrate on cultivating practice.

Why is it that we will not be able to realize enlightenment if we do not generate the resolve to do so? There is a reason for this: "Those with fond desires give rise to deep defilements and attachments toward all desires, and are always experiencing them." That is, we have not gotten free of fond desires, and we do not have the mind of detachment. In the narrow sense, "fond desires" means sexual desire. In the broad sense, it includes the desire for fame, for profit, for flattery, and for everything else. We cannot get free of our ordinary habits of life at all: we cannot abandon them, we cannot transform them. Love of purity, love of cleanliness—these are all fond desires, too. They are very numerous. When we do meditation work and cultivate practice we must reflect back and examine ourselves. Only then will we be able to discover that these "deep defilements and attachments" are not ordinary defilements and attachments. This is far from easy to discover.

People who are always examining their faults at all times wherever they may be, are first rate people. Who are people who cultivate practice? It is those people who examine themselves, and take control of themselves, who check up on themselves all through life. Most people are unwilling to check up on themselves, and easily forgive themselves. They are unable to make strict demands on themselves.

Pay attention to the words "give rise to deep defilements and attachments toward all desires." People give rise to very deep-seated defilements and attachments, and what's more, they think that this is right. In the Mahayana realm, cravings for purity, and a liking for cleanliness are also desires, as is a fondness for the Path. Liking is also one type of fond desire.

The shastra continues: "In some states there is extreme scattering and chaos, and so they are said not to be the stage of *samadhi*. The minds of those who are first cultivating concentration flow along following the five subtle desires and scatter."

There is another kind of state that definitely falls into scattering and chaos. "Those who are first cultivating concentration" refers to those whose meditation work has not yet reached the first *dhyana*. "The five subtle desires" are divided into two types. One type is the five worldly desires, defiling attachments to form, sound, scent, taste, and touch, that provoke such things as craving, anger, ignorance, arrogance, and doubt. This means the desire of the eyes for beautiful sights, of the ears for beautiful sounds, and so on. The other type of desires is internal. That is, you naturally have a fondness for the experiential states you reach in your meditation work: you like to revel in them, and behold them. As long as your mind craves anything at all, then it flows off following [whatever it craves], and then you do not attain *samadhi*. For example, when some people sit and meditate, and they do it well, and they see the light or they see something else, then they begin to covet that something, and play with it, and so they cannot attain *samadhi*.

The shastra says: "In some states there is too much neglect of gathering in, so they are said not to be the stage of *samadhi*. Those who first cultivate concentration are covered with confusion and sleep due to the internal mentality of neglectfulness."

There are also the kind of people who like simplicity. This is particularly true of the Chinese character. Chinese people like simplification. That's why Yogacara theory never was very popular in China. This is because when they look at it, their heads hurt. Yogacara theory is scientific, and logical, and it analyzes things in fine detail, so we Chinese do not like it very much. What we like the best is Zen, that doesn't demand any spoken or written words, that tells stories of becoming enlightened on seeing peach blossoms. The Chinese like simplicity and brevity most of all; they do not like complexity. This type of person is unwilling to analyze and do research. It is easy for them to enter the road of oblivion: they like to sleep. In other words, when we sit in meditation, we often consider a subtle form of sinking down into oblivion as the realm of *samadhi*. This is very bad.

The shastra says: "In some states, there is not yet any realization, and so they are said not to be the stage of *samadhi*. Those who first cultivate concentration, though they do not afflict their minds with scattering and chaos, or by neglecting to gather them in, nevertheless have not yet attained the [stage] of intentionally manifesting

various states of mind and mental objects, and so this is not called *samadhi*."

We must pay attention to this. Some people have not really realized the realm of *samadhi*, and have no real experience of what *samadhi* is. Thus they cannot attain *samadhi*, and cannot be clear in their perception of truth. How can this be explained? People who have just begun to cultivate *samadhi* may sit in meditation without scattering into confusion, and without sinking into oblivion, and without being neglectful, and without lacking vigilance, and without passing over things too casually, and without being absentminded, but nevertheless still not have any achievement in the aspect of intentional action.

What is "intentional action" then? Previously we spoke of ordinary intentionality—that is, one of the "five omnipresent activities." It is present everywhere in the eight consciousnesses. Unless the *alaya* consciousness is transformed into the pure light of great perfect mirror wisdom, intentionality is there in everything. The first seven consciousnesses are the intentionality of the eighth consciousness. In other words, the eight consciousnesses are all the mind engaging in intentional actions. Thus true intent includes the first five consciousnesses, the sixth consciousness, the seventh consciousness, and it even includes the eighth consciousness. All these are within the scope of "intent." This is ordinary intentionality.

The second meaning of the term "intentional action" is the one used in this passage from the shastra. It means the intentional action of the "body born from intent" that comes after enlightenment. Thus, the Zen patriarch Bodhidharma used *The Lankavatara Sutra* to seal the mind, and this mind-seal was passed on again and again. After true awakening, you must attain the body born from intent: only then can you realize the fruit of enlightenment.

What is the body born from intent? *The Yogacarabhumi Shastra* has explained it fully. First of all, an ordinary person's body is also a body born from intent. As I said before, when we become totally depressed and collapse psychologically, this life of ours can spontaneously shrivel up and die. One principle reason that we are alive right now is that our spiritual life is propping up our physical life. This spiritual life is a body born from intent. It is the ordinary person's body born from intent. It is the ordinary person's body born from intent. Having understood this principle, we can take it a step further and say that a person who has been enlightened can create the body born from intent of a sage, a body outside the body, and can

even achieve hundreds of millions of transformation bodies. These are all the function of intent.

The first necessary step for a person cultivating *samadhi* is an act of intent. For example, when we chant the phrase "Hail to Amitabha Buddha, " this is something produced by our intent. This use of the Chinese word *i* ("intent") does not simply mean the sixth consciousness which is also termed *i* in Chinese. Even if the sixth consciousness has no miscellaneous thoughts, and, as the Zen School says, has emptied out past, present, and future, the realm of emptiness that appears before us then is also created by an act of intent.

But can that realm of emptiness exist forever? It cannot, because we immediately start playing with that emptiness. Moreover, it cannot because immediately following it the omnipresent activities come into play—contact, sensation, conception, thinking. When we feel the *ch'i* moving in our bodies, that is just "conception." Thus, the five omnipresent activities are all there, so how can we speak of emptiness? Yogacara theory has analyzed this very clearly. If we only think of emptiness, this is too vague. In the future, when birth and death come, when we think of seeking to realize the fruit of enlightenment, we have not gained any power at all.

Young people today play around with Esoteric Buddhism and the energy channels in the most terrible manner. They spend a lot of time playing with these systems, but they are only playing with the spirit, playing with big false thoughts. Such things have nothing to do with the real energy channels. Buddha already predicted long age that in the Age of the End of the Dharma, two methods would be the most popular—Pure Land Buddhism and Esoteric Buddhism. Once they hear of this statement by Buddha, intelligent people will immediately be alerted to the fact that this is not a joke, and that there is really a reason for this. But this is not the reason that ordinary people play around with these two methods.

For example, when we do sitting meditation, we are only able to sit for half an hour, though we actually intend to sit for three hours, don't we? We cannot manage to do this, because we cannot make our intent resolute enough.

Before, when we read excerpts from the shastra on what is not the stage of *samahita*, we examined ourselves and found that if we do not fall into scattering and chaos, then we fall into oblivion, or else we fall into a neglectful state, and we cannot manage to concentrate and focus our intent. For example, no matter whether you study Taoism,

Pure Land Buddhism, or Esoteric Buddhism, if you want to visualize White-Robed Kuan-yin appearing forever motionless before you, can you accomplish this act of intent or not? If you cannot, then your mind is in a state of scattering and chaos. But someone who has studied hypnotism, or a painter, would be able to do this. An act of intent is focusing the attention. The first step in cultivating cessation or cultivating *samadhi* is impossible without an act of intent. For this reason, some people advocate the combined practice of Zen and Pure Land, focusing mindfulness on the thought of Amitabha Buddha, and continuing this focus from mind-moment to mind-moment. Can you do this or not?

In the past, when the Zen School used the method of studying meditation sayings, they tied up the omnipresent activities "conception" and "thinking" by focusing on questions that had no rationale. After this, if the practitioner could not break through the meditation saying, he had to hold onto the meditation saying, and not forget it. This way he was naturally cultivating cessation. By this means the omnipresent activities of "contact" and "sensation" were also tied up. On one hand, the practitioner was full of doubt; on the other hand, he was in a state of *samadhi*. This is the same as the method of the joint practice of concentration and wisdom.

Therefore, when the ancients taught people to study using meditation sayings, this was a way of focusing intent. This tied up all the five skandhas, form, sensation, conception, synthesis, and consciousness. When the intent was solid and stable, only then could the practitioner attain cessation.

Modern people want to abandon everything since modern life is too tense. When they abandon everything, they feel very relieved and comfortable, and they think that this feeling of comfort is the Path, but this is wrong. This is only one method of using intent. It is very useful for dealing with this modern era, but no more than that. But when you maintain this empty awareness for a long time, this feeling of relaxation, is there still intentional action there? If there is not, then it does not count as *samadhi*.

"Various states of mind and mental objects" means all your states of mind: false thoughts, the fifty-one kinds of mental objects, and all forms of psychological activity, like greed, anger, and ignorance. If these are not transformed, how can you attain *samadhi*? In other words, when you sit in meditation, on the surface you may look as if you are seriously cultivating the Path, but in reality you are locked up

tight by mental states like greed, anger, and ignorance in your mind. Fundamental afflictions and accompanying afflictions all come to you.

As the first step in cultivating *samadhi*, you must perform an act of intent. Only then will you be able to attain cessation. Guarding the apertures in Taoism, visualizations in Esoteric Buddhism, reciting the buddha-name in Pure Land Buddhism, studying Zen meditation: these are all principles of intentional action. Before the sixth consciousness solidifies and takes shape as an experiential realm, it is impossible to attain cessation.

This is a very important point. The *Abhisamayalamkara Shastra* says that when you are cultivating the four intensified practices and intent, if your mental state is not focused and unified, then you will not be able to attain *samadhi*. If you are cultivating the *samadhi* of emptiness, you pay no attention to any false thoughts: if you can observe these false thoughts, and ultimately focus and unify this intent, this counts as attaining *samadhi*. But this state can change and depart. Here I am only discussing cultivating the practice of *samadhi*. Seeing truth is something else.

The shastra says: "In some states there is not yet perfect completion, so these are said not to be the stage of *samadhi*. This means that although there is intentional action, nevertheless you have not yet realized the ultimate stage of the intensified practices and their fruits, so it is not called *samadhi*."

Each step you advance, it becomes more serious. Though you can act intentionally, for example, invoking the buddha-name, and you have almost reached the stage where mind is unified and not in confusion, you have still not realized the four intensified practices. In other words, your physical body and the energy channels have not been wholly transformed. Nothing has been transformed, and you have not been able to attain the results of the four intensified practices, and you still get sick as always. Of course this has no connection with the Dharma Gate of your mind-ground.

But this body composed of the four elements is also a part of the mind. So if you can transform the mind, why can't you transform the physical body? In *The Surangama Sutra* it says: "[Sentient beings] do not know that their physical bodies, and the mountains and rivers and space and the whole world outside them, are all things that appear in the true mind of wondrous illumination." If you cannot even transform your body, if you speak of *samadhi*, aren't you just

fooling yourself? When the shastra speaks of not realizing the ultimate stage of the intensified practices, it means that you have not realized warming, the peak, patience, and the supreme worldly dharma, and you have not transformed the energy channels and the physical body and reached the ultimate level, so this is not called *samadhi*.

There were many enlightened Zen masters who at the end died in painful sicknesses. During the Yuan dynasty, Zen master Kao-feng Miao finally died of a painful stomach disease. Of course, the pain of sickness, coming at birth and going at death, dying sitting or standing up—such things did not matter to him. Many great Zen masters died like this. In terms of the principles of the teaching, this was because they "had not yet realized the ultimate stage of the intensified practices and their fruits." Therefore, ultimately they had not attained *samadhi*, and they had not realized the dharma of perfect completion. They had only awakened to the *dharmakaya*, and that's all. All these people could do is wait until they were in the state between death and rebirth, and try again to succeed in their cultivation completely. Though in theory successful enlightenment in the intermediate state between death and rebirth exists, how it is actually achieved in fact we have no way of seeing.

The shastra says: "Other states have miscellaneous defilements, so they are said not to be the stage of *samadhi*. This means that although you have realized the ultimate fruits of the intensified practices and realized intentional action, nevertheless you are confusing and defiling your mind with all sorts of desires."

All these passages from the shastra give theoretical objections to states which are not *samadhi*. Here the shastra advances another step and tells us that defiling desires can remain even if a person realizes the ultimate fruits of the intensified practices, and has transformed the energy channels, and reaches the level in meditation work that he can emit light and make the earth move, and manages to achieve the ultimate fruits of the intensified practices and intentional action, and achieves the *yin* spirit and the *yang* spirit. This kind of person would surely be seen by ordinary people as a living buddha. But at this point there is still some desire, and it defiles the pure light of the fundamental mind. When desires defile purity, when desires defile an enlightened person, at this level it is still not the ultimate: something good with miscellaneous defilements is not the ultimate.

The shastra says: "In other states there is no independent mastery, so they are said not to be the stage of *samadhi*. This means that even when you have already realized the ultimate fruits of the intensified practices and intentional action, and your mind has no afflictions or defilements, you do not yet have the independent mastery to enter, abide in, and emerge from all the forms of *samadhi* at will, and your concentration is stiff and rough and difficult."

In this state you have already attained the ultimate fruits of the intensified practices and intentional action, and have reached the level where you can leave your body and your mind, and can divide and transform them, and there are no afflictions in your mind. But meditative realms and afflictions are two separate things entirely. Afflictions and defilements in the mind are not easy to get free of. Don't think that by doing a little sitting meditation and having a little meditative accomplishment and understanding a bit of the Buddha Dharma, that you have learned Buddhism. You are only intoxicating yourself. It won't work this way.

If you cannot yourself be the master of entering *samadhi*, abiding in *samadhi*, and emerging from *samadhi*, if you cannot be the master of the ultimate form of *samadhi*, if you enter *samadhi* by chance like a blind cat bumping into a dead rat, then this kind of entering *samadhi* does not count as the ultimate. The ultimate form of *samadhi* is when you yourself are completely able to act the master, and control it as you please, entering *samadhi* when you want to and emerging from *samadhi* when you want to. If you have not yet attained mastery, if you cannot act at will, if sometimes your meditation work is correct and sometimes it is not correct, and it is stiff and rough and difficult, this does not count. If you cannot act the master when you are alive and healthy, then when birth and death come, and you are on the verge of death, you will have no way at all to act the master. You must keep this in mind all the time, especially if you are an older person cultivating practice.

The shastra says: "Some states are not pure, so they are said not to be the stage of *samadhi*. This means that even though you have the mastery to act at will, [entering, abiding in, and emerging from *samadhi*] without any roughness or difficulty, nevertheless you have only successfully cultivated worldly *samadhi*, and so you cannot forever destroy all the mental states and mental objects that afflict you and accompany you and lull you. Therefore this is not called *samadhi*."

There is another kind of state: because the realm of wordly *samadhi* is not pure, it is not called *samadhi*. Even though you can achieve independence and mastery, and act at will, this is worldly *samadhi*, not world-transcending *samadhi*. Here you must pay special attention: when everyone does meditation work and cultivates the energy channels and contemplates the bright points, these are all [forms of] worldly *samadhi*. Even if you cultivate them to the point that you get rid of sickness and extend your life span, they are still worldly *samadhi*. Worldly *samadhi* includes all the concentration states of literary people, technical people, and those who cultivate the martial arts. What is different about world-transcending *samadhi* lies in *prajna*, transcendental wisdom, and in seeing the truth. Worldly *samadhi* is a form of meditation work: it does not include seeing truth within it.

This chapter of the shastra explains what is not *samadhi*, but in fact we still cannot even achieve these realms which are not *samadhi*! If we could achieve them to some extent, then after we die we could at least be born in the six heavens of desire, and it would be a lot more comfortable than our life here in this world. If we could attain this level of meditative accomplishment, it wouldn't be too bad at all. Since right now we are talking about states that are not true *samadhi*, we must be clear about the key link. If we could achieve any of these twelve states discussed in the shastra that are not *samadhi*, this would already be very extraordinary. But up till now, I have never seen anyone who could do this. The shastra is not saying that these states (that are not *samadhi*) which it is discussing here are wrong, just that they are not the true *samadhi* of Buddhism, the correct *samadhi* of enlightenment. This is the distinction.

Because what you practice is worldly *samadhi*, you will never have a way to get rid of fundamental affliction. If you are a worldly person who has a little bit of cultivation and meditative accomplishment, you can reach a level where afflictions are comparatively few, but since you still have not extirpated the root of affliction, it's just that affliction is not operating on a large scale. The afflictions which follow you and lull you are still there. The meaning of "follow you and lull you" is that these afflictions follow after you and delude and confuse you, and make you go into a state of indescribable confusion. Among the fifty-one mental objects, there are twenty kinds of afflictions that follow you and lull you.

Cultivating practice means checking up on these mental states, not simply the work of sitting in meditation. Everyone casually speaks of meditation work: what is so special about meditation work? If you do not properly check up on your mind, you will not find out about the afflictions that follow and lull you until later. I say: "Only after the thing has passed, do you recognize it was a dream. Only when the waves in the wave-mind turn back do you realize they have leveled off." Only after an event has passed do you realize that the event has passed like a dream. Obviously, psychological states tumble along like waves. Fundamental affliction is still there, but you feel everything is pure and clear. All you are aware of is that you are on the Path, and you can only see the afflictions of others. You think that you yourself have no afflictions. You only see that other people are not right whereas you feel that you yourself are right.

Therefore, we must be very clear about the fifty-one mental objects because this is where we set to work in cultivating practice. After this we free ourselves from the five skandhas. (The five skandhas are a single moment of thought.) Step by step we clarify things. Only then can we talk about cultivating *samadhi*.

Samadhi from which the afflictions that follow us and lull us have not been removed is called worldly *samadhi*. The shastra statement, "All states of mind and mental objects," means that if we still have these afflictions that are engendered by mental objects, if we have not cut them off completely, this is not called *samadhi*.

The shastra continues: "Other states have arising, so they are said not to be the stage of *samadhi*. This means that although you do not regress from the *samadhi* you have attained, still you come out of *samadhi*, so this is not called *samadhi*."

What is being called "arising"? You feel certain that there will be no regressing from the *samadhi* you have attained, but in reality you have already come out of *samadhi*. In other words, even though you feel that you are serving and teaching people, and you can respond to everything at will with your mental state completely empty, you still have not attained *samadhi*. This is no more than a bit of clarity attained by the intentional action of the sixth consciousness. The affliction of mental states and mental objects that follow and lull us, and fundamental affliction too, are all still "arising," and you are still within cyclical existence.

The shastra says: "Other states have regressing, so they are said not to be the state of *samadhi*. Because you fall back from the *samadhi* you have attained, it is not called *samadhi*."

In the last of these states that are not *samadhi*, even the most basic *samadhi* is lost. Thus, in cultivating the path of the Great Vehicle bodhisattvas, only when you reach the eighth stage, called "Immovable,"

are you incapable of regressing. In other words, through your cultivation you may have achieved the four *dhyanas* and the eight *samadhis*, but there will still be a time when you regress, and fall back into the six planes of cyclical existence. How can you attain the eighth "Immovable" stage? By *prajna*, by seeing truth, by carrying out vows. When your merit and virtues are complete, then your wisdom will be complete. The most important thing is to perfect your merit and virtues.

I really don't dare explain merit and virtue for if I really explained them, probably the grass in front of my gate would be ten feet deep since no one would come anymore. That's how difficult it is; no one likes to come to hear their shortcomings.

What we have just discussed emphasizes states which are not Buddhist *samadhi*. In what follows I will consider the question of having mind and having no mind. Here the word "mind" refers to the mind-king of the eight consciousnesses, the whole of mind and consciousness. The "mind" of the phrase "mind, intentionality, and discriminating consciousness," namely, the eighth consciousness, the *alaya* consciousness, is included within this, because the eighth consciousness is a creation of mind in this broader sense.

People who study Zen are always talking about having no mind, and working on no mind at all times. Zen master T'ung-an Ch'a had a verse about this:

> Don't say that having no mind is the Path
> Having no mind is still separated
> from it by a barrier.

Having no mind is still far from the Path, but we cannot even accomplish having no mind.

But what is genuine "no mind"? For example, when we are walking along and we happen to bump into someone else, we might say: "I'm sorry! I didn't mean it." This use of the same Chinese term *wu-hsin*, "having no mind," to mean an action was not intentional is obviously not the same as the having no mind of the Buddhist Path; rather it means not keeping track of things or being absent-minded. Forgetful people also do not keep track of things. When some people meditate, they go all day long with their minds empty and vacant. They are very comfortable, very pure and clear. But be careful! Don't think that this is having no thoughts or having no mind. Usually this is being sunk in oblivion in a big way.

After you have been sunk in oblivion for a long time, the result you attain is to fall into the lower planes of existence, into the plane of the animals. The great teacher Tsongkhapa explained this very clearly in his *Extensive Treatise on the Sequence of Steps in the Path of Enlightenment*. He did a major critique of the opinion that having no thoughts is the Path, and he warned people by no means to fall into concentration without thoughts. Otherwise dwelling in the state of no thought might cause people to descend into the animal plane in a future life. You must clearly recognize this point in relation to having mind and having no mind. Having no thoughts is not the path. In fact, it is quite dangerous.

The Yogacarabhumi Shastra is a major treatise. If people who study Yogacara do not master this treatise, they won't get anywhere. So now we should examine *The Yogacarabhumi Shastra*, volume 13, sections eight and nine, where the two stages of having mind and having no mind are discussed.

The shastra says: "What is the stage of having mind? What is the stage of having no mind? These two stages both depend on five gates, and you must recognize their characteristics." That is to say, in the stage of having mind and the stage of having no mind there is a fivefold categorization of dharmas, and you must know their boundaries and their definitions before you can begin to study Buddhism.

The shastra continues, defining the five gates: "First is the gate established on the distribution of stages. Second is the gate established on whether or not the mind is in confusion. Third is the gate established on whether or not there is birth. Fourth is the gate established on a division of stations. Fifth is the gate established on the supreme truth." Now the shastra introduces the first categorization that distinguishes between having mind and not having mind:

> [The gate] established on the distribution of stages means the stage that correlates with the body of the five consciousnesses, the stage of the conceptual consciousness, the stage where there is both *vitarka* and *vicara*, and the stage where there is no *vitarka* but only *vicara*. These four all belong to the stage of having mind.

What is the stage of having mind? It includes the stage that correlates with the body of the five consciousnesses. For example, when the

ordinary person sees something with his or her eyes, or hears something with their ears, or uses the senses of taste, smell, or touch, behind these five sense faculties there are five consciousnesses. The sense faculties and the associated consciousnesses are very hard to distinguish. Dharma master Hsuan-tsang, in his *Verse Guidelines for the Eight Consciousnesses*, spoke a very important line: "For the ignorant, it is hard to separate consciousness from sense faculty." A person who lacks great wisdom cannot tell them apart; he or she cannot distinguish which one is the physical sense organ of the eye, and which one is the eye-consciousness, and so on.

Another example we discussed before: when a person has just stopped breathing, and his eyes have not yet begun to decay, if they are immediately removed, and the remaining life in the eyes has not yet been cut off, have the eyes lost their function or not? The eye-consciousness has already withdrawn back to the *alaya* consciousness, and the sixth consciousness has also withdrawn, but when this eyeball is transplanted to another person, it will still function. Here the body of the five consciousnesses is no longer the body of the five consciousnesses: this is the sense faculty of the eye belonging to the *alaya* consciousness, and the remaining life of the sense faculty of the eye has truly not been cut off. This is not a question of consciousness. The eye-consciousness has already departed, but the doctors take this eyeball, and connect it up, and connect the nerves, and give it to someone else. If there is no obstruction in the nerves, in the person who has received this eyeball, his own eye-consciousness will begin to function, and coordinate with the sense faculty of the eye given by the other person, and this eyeball will be able to see.

Here is another example involving our eyes. (The eyeball is the sense organ which in Buddhism is termed the sense faculty of the eye.) When our eyes see what is in front of us, our eye-consciousness is coordinated with the sixth consciousness focusing on what is before us. [When we conceptualize] what we see as a blackboard or a teacup, this is the sixth consciousness, the conceptual consciousness. At that moment our eyes are focused on looking at what is in front of us, but if people and things off to the side come into view at the same time, this is the functioning of the eye-consciousness, not the conceptual consciousness, because the conceptual consciousness at that moment is fully coordinated with the eye where it is focused. It is the eye-consciousness that is aware of everything that comes in from the side from time to time. But as soon as we know someone is coming in from the side, the moment we recognize this, we immediately start the functioning of discriminating, and the eye-consciousness has already been linked to the sixth consciousness. What started functioning to be aware of the person at the very first instant was the eye-consciousness.

As for the body-consciousness, it is very hard to understand it. If all of you could clearly recognize the body-consciousness, then you could get started in studying the Path and doing meditation work. Before you can talk about starting to cultivate realization, and to cultivate the *sambhogakaya* and the *nirmanakaya*, you must first recognize the body-consciousness.

What is the body-consciousness? Imagine you are about ten years old, and it's springtime, and you're asleep. You wake up early in the morning, with no worries, and a languid feeling. This is precisely the feeling that the Confucian sage Tseng-tzu expressed when he was about to die: "Uncover my feet and my hands." Hands and feet are there, but you are not aware of them at all. You have had a very sweet sleep, and you have awakened. Your body can move, and it moves, but you do not think of moving it. Only at such a time will you be able to understand what the body-consciousness is. It is definitely not this body, however: this body is an outer husk. Within this body there is another layer, an obscure inner embryo. That at last is the functioning of the body-consciousness. If you can get hold of that one and cultivate it, then you will be happy.

If you set your thoughts moving again, the sixth consciousness is added on, and the body-consciousness is joined with the sixth consciousness. Once the sixth consciousness, this discriminating intellect, comes along, then it is spoiled, and all kinds of afflictions arrive. You may begin to think: "I have to get out of bed. I have to go to work." These thoughts are all the business of the sixth consciousness.

So then, what is the stage of having mind? The first part is "the stage that correlates with the body of the five consciousnesses." This is the experiential realm that arises when the first five consciousnesses are matched with the false mind of the conceptual consciousness.

The second one is "the stage of the conceptual consciousness," the function set in motion by the false states of mind of the sixth consciousness alone.

The third one is "the stage where there is both *vitarka* and *vicara*." This is the realm of the first *dhyana* where there is both awareness and observation attained by the Venerable Rahula described in

an earlier lecture. "With awareness and observation" is the old translation. Dharma master Hsuan-tsang did not agree with this kind of translation, so he used the two words *hsuan* "seeking" (for *vitarka*) and *ssu* "watching" (for *vicara*). When we meditate to search for the Path, and to search for the realm of *samadhi*, this is seeking. When we get a little more clever, we do not search anymore, we just hold on there. This is watching. The average person always takes the realm of watching, the realm of *vicara*, as the realm of *samadhi*. He sits there vacantly concentrating, but he is still aware of a sense of waiting and judging. This all belongs in the stage of having mind.

Another step further is the fourth stage, "the stage where there is no *vitarka* but only *vicara*." This is equivalent to the realms of the second and third *dhyanas*. When you sit down to meditate, there are no miscellaneous thoughts in your mind. You do not try to seek for any meditative accomplishments, and you do not seek any experiential realms. There is only *vicara*, watching, a consistent blank concentration, a purity and clarity there. If you take this realm for *samadhi*, you are mistaken. This is just a state of consciousness, a condition of false mind.

There four orientations are all termed stages of having mind. Our psychological states as ordinary people belong in the category of stages of having mind.

The shastra continues: "In the stage where there is neither *vitarka* nor *vicara*, apart from the *samadhi* without thought, the *samadhi* of giving birth without thoughts, and the *samadhi* of total extinction, all the other states belong to the stage of having mind." *The Yogacarabhumi Shastra* calls everything from the second *dhyana* to the formless realm "the stage where there is neither *vitarka* nor *vicara*." What is says here is that apart from these three realms of *samadhi*, the rest all belong to the stage of having mind.

There are also differences in degree within the stage where there is neither *vitarka* nor *vicara*. Yogacara analyzes this very clearly, step by step, in full detail. When there is no *vitarka*, when we sit in meditation, we are very pure and clear and thoughts do not run off in confusion, and there is no confused seeking. Then there is only a very smooth and steady realm laid out there: this is the stage where there is no *vitarka*, only *vicara*. Is there anything here or not? There still is something here. Recognizing this realm is included in the conception and thinking of the five omnipresent activities. When we come to the realm where there is neither *vitarka* nor *vicara*, we have transcended the psychological condition of conception, and we have reached the

samadhi of giving birth without thought. When we advance one more level, we can give rise to functioning without thoughts, we have the capability of functioning without thoughts.

Strictly speaking, at the very first level of the *samadhi* of giving birth without thoughts, we have just touched the border of the realm indicated by the dictum in *The Diamond Sutra*: "You must give birth to your mind without abiding anywhere." Speaking in general terms, *prajna*, transcendental wisdom, is easy to explain: it means giving birth to your mind fundamentally without abiding anywhere. This is still not the ultimate, it is too vague and general.

The shastra continues: "As for the *samadhi* without thought, [the *samadhi* of] giving birth without thoughts, and the *samadhi* of total extinction, these belong to the stage of not having mind."

Only when you reach these three realms of *samadhi* can you say that your *samadhi* has reached the stage of not having mind. This section is addressed to cultivating realization and doing meditation work, not to seeing truth. However, this is seeing truth in the work of cultivating realization. If you do not recognize this point clearly, then you will do your meditation work in a very muddled confused way, like a country bumpkin in a city, and it will not work. So you must certainly be clear about this point before you can do well.

In what follows, the shastra introduces the second set of criteria for categorization into having mind and not having mind.

The shastra says: "As to the one established according to whether the mind is in confusion or not, when the four inversions turn your mind upside-down, this is called a confused mind. If the four inversions do not turn your mind upside-down, this is called a mind that is not confused. The mind that is in confusion here is also called not having mind, because its true nature has been lost and spoiled."

When the average person's mind scatters in confusion, it is also called being mindless, because he has lost his mindfulness and his inherent true nature has been spoiled by being scattered. Therefore we must pay attention to this: When we are doing meditation work and cultivating practice, and we feel that we are always empty all the way through, at all times wherever we are, and it seems very pure and clear, we then assume that we have reached the stage of not having mind. But in reality we have just lost our mindfuless, this not having mind is right in the midst of upside-down error, and we do not realize it. This is very much to be feared.

From the point of view of my many decades of experience, many many people who cultivate meditation work wind up taking this

road, and go on in this kind of muddled confusion. It is just as Zen master Hsueh-tou said in verse:

Too bad that so many people
    fishing [for enlightenment]
Follow the pattern and become confused
    and lose their hooks and poles.

Several of you veteran fellow students should pay special attention to this. Your fishing poles have already been taken back by me. You already have no mind, because you have become deluded and lost the fundamental mind of cultivating practice.

The shastra says: "For example, when worldly people see someone whose mind is crazy and confused, they say this person is mindless, because this crazy confused mind has lost its original nature."

When we see someone who is insane, we also say he or she is a mindless person, because he or she is totally confused, and they have lost the original nature amidst delusion. For some people who cultivate practice, it is very easy to go down this road. You must be sure to pay attention to this. Thus, a Zen master said:

For ten thousand ages, the clear pond
    and the moon in the void
Only when you have dragged through the pond
    again and again will you be sure to know.

It is not that simple. Your merit and virtue are not sufficient, so you cannot arrive at wisdom.

The shastra says: "In this gate, all forms of inverted and confused mind are called the stage of not having mind. If you do not confuse your mind, it is called the stage of having mind."

The opposite of the stage of not having mind is the stage of having mind. From the point of view of the Buddha Dharma, the minds of all ordinary people, before they have achieved enlightenment, are full of afflictions and confusion, and all are reckoned to be in the stage of not having mind because they have not realized fundamental true nature. People who have genuinely cultivated and realized the Buddha Dharma, and attained *samadhi* and wisdom are said to be at the stage of having mind. This is an explanation of the second gate.

The shastra says: "As for the one established on whether or not there is birth, because of the eight causal conditions, one's mind may be born, or it may not be born, because the root is destroyed."

The third gate uses the criterion of whether mind is "born" or "not born" to distinguish between "having mind" and "not having mind." For example, when we study Buddhism the most difficult thing is that the mind of compassion is very hard to give birth to. That is to say, it is very difficult to genuinely and correctly develop the mind of carrying out vows. At the verbal level, we want to help other people, be compassionate to other people, save other people. Though our mouths talk like this, in reality, this is very hard to accomplish. Thus, when we cultivate practice, we only speak of the mind of merit. A basis in respect to carrying out vows is very hard to establish, and we can even say that we have not established this basis.

As to the gate of bodhisattva practice, this one is very hard to explain. The Zen masters through the generations only spoke of seeing truth: they didn't dare say much about the gate of practice. If they had truly discussed the gate of bodhisattva practice, their disciples would have run away because the demands of bodhisattva practice are too strict. But if the teaching is not strict, it is the teacher's fault. A real teacher would rather make strict demands so that the grass in front of his gate would grow three feet tall. Not just three feet tall, but even a hundred feet tall wouldn't matter. It would be perfectly all right if there were no one coming there at all: the one person inside the gate would be very comfortable. Speaking frankly, the gate of bodhisattva practice is very difficult, too difficult.

In some cases, when mind is not born, it is because the root, the physical capability, has been destroyed. For example, when the mind and nerves are destroyed, mental states cannot be born. Even though Buddhism says that the four elements are all empty, the four elements are still very important. Buddha said that a body with free time is hard to attain. You may be born as a human being, but free time is hard to attain, and physical health and complete soundness of all the faculties is also hard to attain. Especially in this era of industry and commerce, free time is not easy to find. What a great blessing it is to be able to have the free time to sit there indulging in high-flown talk, speaking falsely about cultivating the Path!

The shastra says that sometimes mind is not born "because no realm appears before you." Sometimes you do your utmost in your meditation work, and the experiential realm does not come.

In the past there was an old master who cultivated the Path and who had achieved some power. He neither ate nor slept, but around midnight, as I kept talking with him, he did not pay any attention, but leaned on a chair, and shut his eyes for about half an hour. After this his eyes opened wide, and he began talking again. He was able to keep on talking until midnight on the second day. At midnight, he again stopped talking, closed his eyes, and took a rest. I asked him why he did this, and he said that meditation had come looking for him. That is, an experiential realm had appeared in front of him.

In *Mencius*, in the second part of the chapter on "Fully Realizing Mind" [7 B 25], it says: "Having it in one's own mind is called being true." When the scene arrives [in your meditation], you must stabilize it: this is an experiential realm appearing in front of you. Some people do meditation work for a long while, and no experiential realms appear to them. In this case you must strictly examine yourself and see if this is due to a psychological obstruction or a physiological obstruction. If you ask if there is some other method besides strictly examining yourself, this is the mind of desire, the mind of greed, and such bonds and compulsions making trouble. If you cannot even check up on these, then how can you cultivate the realization of enlightenment?

The shastra also says that sometimes mind is not born "because you lack [enlightened] intentional action." Your failure to perfect intentional action is very much related to what your root capacity is and how you should act intentionally. The shastra further states that sometimes "mind is not born because you have not attained, or because you have gone against it, or because it is already cut off, or because it is already extinct, or because it has already been born."

All these are reasons why mind cannot be born. The sequence of steps in giving birth to mind in the cultivation methods of Esoteric Buddhism come from this. All the theories of Esoteric Buddhism are the basic Yogacara theories. Thus all its cultivation methods require cultivating a sequence of steps of giving birth. What is not there must be built: it is like building on level ground and giving birth to a twelve-story tower. So Esoteric Buddhism is giving birth to existence in the midst of nonexistence, then after giving birth to existence, it empties it out and returns back to the pure light, emptying out what has been built. This is called the sequence of perfect completion.

The shastra says: "By going against all these causal conditions [that prevent mind being born], mind can be born." Only when it is not subject to the restrictions of the limits of the eight phenomena

listed above, can the mind of the Path be born. The shastra continues: "In this, if you have the causal conditions for its birth, mind can be born. This is called the stage of having mind. If you encounter the causal conditions that do not give birth to mind, then mind cannot be born, and this is called the stage of not having mind."

In other words, if you are fully equipped with the causes of birth, and give birth to mind, this is the stage of having mind. With the opposite causal conditions mind is not born, and this is the stage of not having mind.

The fourth gate "is established on a division of stations. This means that apart from the six stations, you must know all the others that are called stages of having mind." What then is established on a division of stages? It includes six stations, and except for these six stations, all the rest are stages of having mind.

The shastra says: "What are these six stations? The station of mindless sleep, the station of mindless unconsciousness, the station of *samadhi* without thought, the station of birth without thought, the station of total extinction, and the station of the realm of nirvana without remaining dependency. These six are called the stages of not having mind."

Of these six, some are the fruits of ordinary people, and some are the highest fruits of the Great Vehicle. These stations all reach the stage of not having mind, but there are differences in their levels. *The Diamond Sutra* says: "All the worthy sages use the uncreated uncontrived Dharma to make differentiations." In these six stations, the attainment of the Path is not bad, but there are still differences in degree, in accomplishment, and in level. Among the six stations, "the station of mindless sleep" is the mindlessness of ordinary people. When they fall asleep, they forget everything. This, too, is a form of not having mind. If people who cultivate the Path commit this mistake, they cannot forgive themselves: their meditative accomplishment is insufficient, because they are sinking down into oblivion.

"The station of mindless unconsciousness" is like when you have passed out, or fallen, or been wounded, or when you have suffered a concussion and lost your memory. These are all in the category of the station of unconsciousness; they are conditions of sickness, and are not right. From the point of view of the Buddha Dharma, if a person suffers a concussion, and forgets everything in his past, and cannot recognize people he knows well, at that point, where is his original nature? If he is cured, will it come back? If he cannot be cured, how

can he recover his original nature? These are important scientific questions. To study Buddhism we must investigate these areas. The Buddha Dharma is absolutely scientific, it is not that simple. You must not believe in it without enough thought, or work at it without enough thought. Strictly speaking, these are all questions that Buddhism must be able to answer.

"The station of *samadhi* without thought" also belongs to the stage of not having mind. The station of *samadhi* without thought is not the realization of the Path of enlightenment. Shakyamuni Buddha studied *samadhi* without thought for three years before he recognized that it was not the Path to enlightenment. Then he realized his error and abandoned this practice, and did not do it anymore. *Samadhi* without thought is a station of the paths outside Buddhism. But in *samadhi* without thought there is the heaven without thought. Although this is a station of the outside paths, compared to our station, it is still much higher. Although it is still in the world of form, it has still transcended the heavens of the realm of desire.

If a person can reach the state without thoughts, even though he does not do good, he absolutely does no evil. Since he does not do evil, relying on the rewards for goodness, he will be able to be reborn in heaven. What's more, the state without thoughts is a realm of one kind of *samadhi*. We must not look down on it. We ourselves still cannot manage to attain it!

Some people fear falling into inert emptiness when they meditate. In reality, if you could rally reach inert emptiness, we would have to congratulate you. I'm afraid you are only playing with that emptiness, that you cannot achieve inert emptiness. In "the station of birth without thought," you are born in the heaven without thought. The "station of total extinction" is different: it is the station of the arhats, and goes beyond the four *dhyanas* and the eight *samadhis*. In the nine stages of *samadhi*, in the *samadhi* of total extinction, body and mind are both extinct. It is like taking a long vacation from cyclical existence. But in the end you must return to the cycle of birth and death. In the *samadhi* of total extinction you can escape into the realm of one-sided emptiness and the function of emptiness annihilates the functioning of the body and mind. "The station of nirvana without any remaining dependency" is the station of the Mahayana bodhisattvas, the station of the independently enlightened bodhisattvas. These six stations are called the stage of not having mind.

The fifth gate is the final method of differentiating between having mind and not having mind. The shastra says: "The one established on the supreme truth means only the realm of nirvana without any remaining dependency. This is the stage of not having mind."

The Zen School speaks of illuminating mind and seeing true nature, and penetrating straight through the locked barrier. After you break through the triple barrier of the three realms, then you must break through these remaining dependencies, and realize nirvana without any remaining dependency. What are remaining dependencies? This is when the great arhats and the independently enlightened buddhas have reached the stage of nirvana, but the root of affliction has not yet been cut off.

This is what *The Vimalakirti Sutra* describes as "remaining habits have not yet been cut off." All the great bodhisattvas and great arhats entered the private room of the layman Vimalakirti. (In Chinese Buddhist temples, the term *fang-chang* [which literally means "ten feet square"] for the abbot's private room is based on *The Vimalakirti Sutra*. Vimalakirti's room was ten feet square, but billions of celestial *nagas* and *devas* were able to enter it and sit there.)

What happened in this scene in the sutra was that when the female *devas* scattered flowers, the arhats closed their eyes, because they did not want to let their minds move. But the celestial flowers stuck to the bodies of the arhats, and they could not get them off. The celestial flowers did not stick to the bodies of the bodhisattvas, and all fell off. Because the remaining habits of the arhats had not yet been cut off, the celestial flowers stuck to their bodies. The arhats did not want sound or form, but sometimes they still glanced at sound and form. When they glanced, their minds did not move, but the heavenly flowers stuck to their bodies anyway because their remaining habits had not yet been cut off. Therefore, even though they had attained nirvana, theirs was called nirvana with remaining dependencies. This is because as soon as the root of affliction is provoked, it is stirred up again.

It is only upon attaining the realm of the buddhas, the true supreme mind, that you reach nirvana without any remaining dependency. This is what Zen master Lo-p'u spoke of in his verse:

Only at the last word
Do you finally reach the locked barrier
It cuts off the essential bridge
And does not let ordinary or holy through

This is the supreme truth. The shastra continues: "What is the reason that nirvana without remaining dependency is the stage of

having no mind? Because in this realm, even the *alaya* consciousness is forever extinct."

Only when you arrive at the realm where you penetrate through the final locked barrier, and you attain the supreme truth, do you transform the *alaya* consciousness into the great perfect mirror wisdom. Only then is the *alaya* consciousness forever extinct. Only then is it nirvana without remaining dependency. Only then do you reach the purity of inherent true nature.

The shastra says: "Since revolving consciousness is extinct in the remaining stations, they are called the stage of not having mind." The first five consciousnesses are transformed into "the wisdom to accomplish actions." The sixth consciousness is transformed into "the subtle observing wisdom." The seventh consciousness is transformed into "the equality wisdom." The eighth consciousness is transformed into "the great perfect mirror wisdom." You transform the eight consciousnesses into the four wisdoms of the buddhas, and your realization arrives at the three buddha-bodies, and you achieve the *dharmakaya*, the *sambhogakaya*, and the *nirmanakaya*. The three buddha-bodies and the four buddha-wisdoms are equal. When you are not attached to and do not abide in the perfect purity of the four wisdoms, and you do not abide in and have no attachments to the wondrous functioning of the six spiritual powers, and you reach nirvana without remaining dependency, only then do you truly arrive at the stage of having no mind, the realm of the buddhas.

The shastra says: "In terms of the supreme truth, it is not the stage of having no mind if the alaya consciousness is not yet forever completely extinct."

The eighth consciousness is also translated as the storehouse consciousness. *Alayavijnana* is its Sanskrit name. If it had simply been translated with the word "storehouse," the meaning expressed would not have been complete enough, because it includes three functions: the ability to store, the contents which are stored, and the attachments to what is stored. It can contain all the seeds of past, present, and future [experiences and actions]. It holds onto what is stored very tightly, so its function is differential ripening: the various sorts of causal conditions ripen at different times and in different places. This refers to the karmic rewards of cyclical existence. Even a computer could not make a clear account of this differential ripening—it is really too intricate and complicated.

7

ZEN SCHOOL MODELS FOR CULTIVATING *SAMADHI*

The Buddha Dharma is in the world
Awakening is not apart from the world
If you seek enlightenment apart from the world
It is like seeking rabbit horns.

These famous lines from the Sixth Patriarch refer to "practice," to conduct. The Buddha Dharma is in the world. Buddha said this, too. In the sutras, someone asked the Buddha: O World-Honored One, why did you become a buddha in this filthy world of ours? Buddha said: When you see the filthiness of this world, you are only seeing one aspect. It also has another aspect, an aspect of pure light, just like the Land of Ultimate Bliss in the West and all the pure lands. So after he had given this answer, Buddha immediately manifested his spiritual powers, and touched the ground with his toe, and at that moment the light aspect of this world appeared.

This is a meditation point. This world has an aspect of pure light, the same pure light as Amitabha Buddha's Land of Ultimate Bliss and the worlds of the other buddhas.

After this, the Buddha said that before they become buddhas, all the buddhas must come here to become buddhas. He said that it is not easy to become a buddha in other worlds. For example, it is very hard for *devas* to become buddhas, and it is very hard for the people in Kurudvipa [the northern continent in Indian Buddhist cosmology] to become buddhas, because the blessings they experience are too good, and they enjoy pure pleasure with no pain. Because they do not have the stimulus of pain and suffering, the people there cannot develop the mentality of aversion and detachment. Therefore, all sentient beings who want to become buddhas must come to this world of ours.

In Saha, this world of ours, good and evil and suffering and pleasure are mixed together. They are all mixed together, but there is more pain and suffering. Because of this pain and suffering, it is easy

to cultivate the Path. If there were no sentient beings, why would it be necessary to become buddha? If there were no sentient beings, there wouldn't need to be buddhas, because everyone would be a buddha already. Enlightenment and becoming buddha exists only because sentient beings and suffering and affliction exist.

The statement that "The Buddha Dharma is in the world" encompasses both seeing truth and carrying out vows. Because the world is the evil world of the five corruptions, it requires giving charity, and it requires keeping discipline. Because the world is very painful, and very bad, you can only complete your meritorious accomplishments when you save yourself and save others here. I say this in terms of the relative truth. At the metaphysical level, there is no distinction at all between worldly and not worldly. In *The Altar Sutra* the Sixth Patriarch tells us:

> The Buddha Dharma is in the world
> Awakening is not apart from the world.

If you leave the world, there is no way to seek enlightenment. If you have not known pain and suffering, you will not know the comfort of happiness and bliss. If you have not had afflictions, you will not know the peace of purity and clarity. Therefore affliction is itself enlightenment, and you can develop from this level. It is wrong "if you seek enlightenment apart from the world," because if you have really leaped out of the world and the three realms, then you are already a buddha: you are already in the state of *bodhi*, and you don't need to keep seeking *bodhi*. There is no reason for you to become two buddhas. Therefore Mahayana Buddhism says that the Buddha Dharma is in the world. This refers to the "gate of practice."

Cultivating the Path by sitting meditation is only one part in ten thousand of the gate of practice. All sorts of other conduct involved in being a human being and doing things are all included in the Buddha Dharma's gate of practice. This is the reason for saying that the Buddha Dharma is not apart from the world. You must not think that because the Buddha Dharma is not apart from the world, this means that you should cultivate the Path on one hand, and on the other hand want all the pleasures of success and fame and wealth and social status and alcohol and sex and avarice. You are wrong if you think that way.

In *The Vimalakirti Sutra* it says that lotuses cannot grow in the clean soil, or in the pure places on the mountain peaks. Lotuses can only grow in the muddiest, dirtiest, lowest places, and there they grow more lush, and with a purer fragrance, and more immaculate: their flowers grow bigger, and not a speck of dirt can stain them. Lotuses represent the spirit of the Buddha Dharma. Thus the metaphor of the lotuses expresses the idea that the Buddhist teaching is perfected in the dirtiest, most difficult places in this evil world of the five corruptions. This is the principle of the Buddha Dharma not being apart from the world. Do not think that since Buddhism is in the world, it is not necessary to transcend the world. This is wrong: you still have to transcend the world.

But there is a difference between transcending the world and leaving home. In terms of worldly conventions, leaving home just means leaving this home, and going to that home. Transcending the world means leaving this world and going to another world. There is no such thing as transcending the three realms and still being in this world. Only when you leap beyond the three realms, and you are no longer within the five elements, have you truly transcended the world. You must be clear about this fundamental principle.

There is a book called *The Zen School's Direct Pointing: The Great Matter*. The author, Shih Ch'eng-chin, received the *chin-shih* [the highest degree of the official examinations] during the Ch'ing Dynasty. He had a career as an official, and in his later years he studied Zen. In the first section of this book, he talks about what he learned in his study of Buddhism, and his perception of truth. This shows the path of a Neo-Confucian studying Zen, and it is very good. If you cultivate practice according to this, you will definitely not fail from being born as a human or a *deva*. The later section of the book, "The Great Matter" is very relevant [to us], and very good.

One fellow student says that scholars in Europe and America think that the Chinese Zen School is fundamentally opposed to Buddhism. This idea is terribly wrong. But nowadays in Europe and America those engaged in Zen studies are following this road. In fact, the true state of affairs is exactly the opposite. The Zen School speaks of the Buddha Dharma everywhere.

The Zen School started to decline during the Yuan Dynasty. This book by Shih Ch'eng-chin has reference materials consisting of some meditation cases he collected and recorded, and these are very good.

No other book has such a complete collection. Among these cases dealing with "the Great Matter," he has collected meditation cases involving Yuan-wu K'o-ch'in, Ta-hui Tsung-kao, Kao-feng Miao, Hsueh-tou Ch'in, and others. All of these are excellent meditation cases.

In relation to this book, there are several points you must recognize: First, genuine Zen halls in mainland China are exactly as described in the book. Second, you can observe how those people worked on cultivating practice: this is the standard for genuine Zen halls. Third, you can also observe the decline of the Zen School. Fourth, we can study this book as a reference, and use it as a mirror for our own individual efforts. Fifth, many people cultivated practice without going all out, but since they did not sleep, they thought this was studying Zen. When you read this book yourself, then you will understand clearly.

Now to understand Zen and cultivation a little bit more, we will study a meditation case involving Zen master Hsueh-tou Ch'in. In *The Continuation of the Record of Pointing at the Moon*, Hsueh-tou Ch'in's name is given as Yang-shan Ch'in. Hsueh-tou and Yang-shan are both names of temples where he lived.

In this passage the literary language is very simple and plain. Some people benefit from simple language, and some people benefit from profound language. This is because people are at different levels. Generally when I lecture I cannot lecture only to certain people. Those people who have already read and understood this passage at this point might as well work on their patience: this, too, is one part of the gate of practice. To turn from being superior and brilliant to being humble and lowly is meritorious. But people of superior brilliance cannot depart from the plain and simple. Above all, do not have the idea that you are superior and brilliant. Before you can attain the Path, you must discard this idea.

"In an open talk, Master Ch'in said: 'I left home when I was five, and became the attendant of my teacher. Hearing him talk with guests, I found out about the existence of this matter of enlightenment, and I fully believed in it.'" The small characters in the text are Shih Ch'eng-chin's notes.

"Master Ch'in continued: 'Then I studied sitting meditation. I was born stupid and dull, and after experiencing all sorts of hardships, at sixteen I became a monk.'" Only after accepting the precepts was he a regular monk. Accepting the precepts means accepting the monks' code of discipline.

"Master Ch'in continued: 'At eighteen I went traveling on foot. I was keen to go out and study this affair until I understood it. In the assembly of Master T'ieh-chueh Yuan at Shuang-lin I did intensive meditation (strict seven-day sessions). I was in the monks' hall from morning till night (doing nothing all day long but sitting in meditation and walking carrying incense), without going out the door into the courtyard. Even when I went into the monks' room or into the privy (the toilet), I held my hands inside my sleeves folded across my breast, and went back and forth very slowly, without glancing to either side (keeping discipline at all times), looking no more than three feet in front of me.

"'Our venerable teacher, being in the Tung-shan line, (an elder in the Ts'ao-Tung School) made people contemplate the saying "Does a dog have buddha-nature? No." (The Ts'ao-Tung School at that time in the Yuan Dynasty used this technique.) [Our teacher taught us] that when mixed consciousness and miscellaneous thoughts arise, we should put the word "No" lightly on the tips of our noses. As soon as we saw these thoughts cease, we should immediately abandon concerns and just sit there silently. When it was pure and ripe, after a long time we would spontaneously mesh [with thusness].'"

By the time of the Yuan Dynasty, the Ts'ao-Tung School method was to study this meditation saying. Seventy or eighty years before this time, Zen master Ta-hui Tsung-kao had already castigated this as the misguided Zen of silent illumination, but in the later generations many people followed this mistaken route. What a big problem it still is today!

"Master Ch'in continued: 'The sects descended from Tung-shan hemmed people in very tight with this method of meditation work, so that they could work on it for ten or twenty years without getting anywhere. Therefore, it was hard for the succession to continue.'"

This is the way the Ts'ao-Tung School was operating. For their followers, the meditation work was close and continuous. When false thoughts came, they would use the meditation saying to wrap them up in. When they were wrapped up to the point that the meditation saying was not there, then they would abandon it all at once, and once they had reached stable concentration in the realm of emptiness, they would maintain it for a long time. People studying the

Ts'ao-Tung School often worked for ten or twenty years without even having a shadow of enlightenment. They had meditative accomplishments, but not enlightenment. Therefore, later on, the Ts'ao-Tung School's Dharma Gate was cut off, and very few people really understood the Ts'ao-Tung School's methods of cultivation.

"Master Ch'in continued: 'One time I suddenly reflected back on the place where the thoughts were arising, and as I was reflecting back, the thoughts immediately froze, and it was profoundly pure and clear, unmoving and unwavering.'"

The method of work that Hsueh-tou Ch'in was using then was this: As soon as a thought arose, he would immediately turn around and search for the thought. As soon as he reflected back, this thought would immediately be empty then and there. Without any thoughts, his mental state was clear and pure. No miscellaneous thoughts at all were moving.

"Master Ch'in continued: 'I sat for a whole day as if it were an instant. I did not hear the sound of the bells and drums signaling the periods of the monks' day, and I passed through the noon meal and the end of the sitting period without being aware of it at all.'" All the people of the past exerted themselves like this. Nowadays, however, people find this hard to do.

Master Ch'in continued with his story: "'The elder heard that I was sitting well, and he came down to the monks' hall to have a look. He praised me from his Dharma seat.'" At this time Ch'in was only eighteen years old. "'When I was nineteen, I went to Ling-yin Temple and hung up my bag there.'" This means he went to Ling-yin Temple in Hangchow and stayed there for awhile. "'I met Miao-feng, but Miao-feng died and Shih-t'ien succeeded to his position.'" Shih-t'ien succeeded to the abbot's responsibilities. "'Ying-tung Sou was the monk in charge of receiving guests.'" The famous Zen man, Master Sou of Ying-tung was serving as the monk in charge of guests at that time at Ling-yin Temple. "'While I was in the room of the monk in charge of guests, I saw a secretary who had come from Ch'u-chou.'" A monk had come from Ch'u-chou to serve as secretary of the temple; this corresponds to a modern day chief confidential secretary. "'The secretary said to me, "Brother Ch'in, this meditation work of yours is stagnant water, that cannot help matters. You are still not avoiding dividing motion and stillness into two separate things."'" If you say that Zen is only sitting cross-legged in meditation, that it won't do to move, you are dividing motion and stillness into two things.

When the ancients were alerted by their fellow students and friends in the Path like this, their whole bodies broke out in a sweat. In days gone by when I was studying Zen, I too thought that I was something special. One time, a friend in the Path asked me: People all say you are enlightened, but have you achieved the state where being awake and dreaming are one suchness? I did not make a sound. In my mind I knew full well how things stood: for me being awake and dreaming were not the same. So I went back to work. When I reached the level where being awake and dreaming were one suchness, I met a young monk who asked me: When there are no dreams and no thoughts, where is the master? Do you know? Again, I was stumped by this question, so I went back to work again.

So when someone else alerts you to something, "the good horse runs when he sees the shadow of the whip." How could you be like all the people who are hit by an enlightened teacher and don't even realize it? This time Hsueh-tou Ch'in was hit by an enlightened teacher, and he knew it was serious.

"Master Ch'in continued: 'Only after he had spoken to me with such effect, did this experiential realm appear before me as soon as I sat down to meditate. But as soon as I left the meditation seat to walk around, or when I was busy eating, it did not appear anymore at all.'"

Here Master Ch'in says: Right! When I sit in meditation, it is very clear and pure, and this experiential realm is there. But if I stop sitting cross-legged, or if I take a spoon to eat soup, or chopsticks to eat rice, this realm is not there anymore. This is not right!

The young monk from Ch'u-chou was superior to Ch'in, and went on to say to him: "'When you study Zen you must arouse the feeling of doubt. Great doubt, great awakening. Small doubt, small awakening. No doubt, no awakening. To succeed, you must focus your doubt on a meditation case.' Master Ch'in commented: 'Though he had not done very much meditation work, he had come from the congregation of Master Bu-an, and Bu-an was the disciple of Sung-yan, so after all, what he said was correct.'" (Master Bu-an was very famous in the Zen School, and he was the disciple of the old master Sung-yuan of the Lin-chi School.)

Ch'in thought that what the secretary-monk said was certainly the correct road, that he could not be wrong, and so he believed him. A modern day person in a similar situation would certainly think: "I do sitting meditation better than you. You do not even meditate. Who do you think you are?"

Ch'in continues: "'I immediately changed the meditation case I used, and put my attention on "What is Buddha? Something to wipe your ass with." I went on and on doubting it and contemplating it from every angle. Because I had changed my meditation saying, my previous way of living was all thrown into confusion.'" This way of talking is all Yuan and Ming dynasty colloquial language. "'Though I wrapped myself in a quilt, my side never touched the mat. From morning to night, whether walking or sitting, it was all oblivion or scattering, I was in total confusion, and I could not attain even a moment of clarity.'"

Some people think that even if they do not go all out, if they sit in meditation without sleeping, this is the Path. Starting in the Yuan and Ming periods, this absurd pattern became common. People studying Zen would sit all day long meditating, studying meditation sayings, working at their meditation. But these people made themselves groggy and muddleheaded, or else became scattered and confused with many afflictions. So you should not believe this is exactly right.

Ch'in continues: "'I heard that Master T'ien-mu had been Sung-yuan's attendant for a long time, and was Sung-yuan's legitimate successor. I was determined to find out what Sung-yuan had said, so I traveled to Pure Compassion Temple and hung up my bag there.'" Master T'ien-mu was a famous Zen teacher, and at that time he was abbot of Pure Compassion Temple, so Hsueh-tou Ch'in traveled there. "'With incense in the breast of my robe, I paid a visit to the abbot's quarters to ask for instruction.'" The rule in the Zen School was to bring three sticks of incense to ask the attendants to inform the teacher that someone is requesting to see him. "'I made nine full prostrations.'" There was a rule for this, too. If you received an agreeable answer, you lit the three sticks of incense and kowtowed. If the reply did not suit you, you just took out the incense, and did not kowtow, indicating that you did not agree.

Ch'in continues: "'T'ien-mu asked me: "How do you do meditation work?" I then gave him a direct account of my experiences from the beginning. He said: "Haven't you read the story of how Lin-chi asked Pai-chang three times about the great meaning of the Buddha Dharma, and got beaten three times [without understanding], and then [after he had awakened] ended up punching Ta-yu three times in the ribs?* Lin-chi afterwards said to Ta-yu: 'Actually, there is not much to Pai-chang's Buddha Dharma.' You should look at things like this."'" When Ch'in reported to Master T'ien-mu his experiences in doing meditation work, T'ien-mu told him the experience of Lin-chi in seeking the Path and achieving enlightenment.

*Lin-chi had asked Ta-yu where he had gone wrong, to have Pai-chang beat him. Ta-yu told Lin-chi that Pai-chang was just being compassionate. At this Lin-chi was awakened.

T'ien-mu also told Ch'in this: "'When Hun-yuan was abbot of this temple, I went to his room soon after I had arrived here. He cited this saying to me: "An obvious case. Before you came in the gate, I already gave you thirty blows." Just look at things this way.'"

In other words T'ien-mu told Ch'in that when Master Hun-yuan was abbot there, and he himself had just arrived, someone led him into the abbot's room to ask about the Buddha Dharma. Hun-yuan said: An obvious case. What did you come to ask about? I should beat you. Before you even came in the gate, I should have given you thirty blows. T'ien-mu was telling Ch'in: This is where you should look.

Ch'in continues: "'What Master T'ien-mu said to me was a demonstration of the transcendental.'" That is, a highest level method. "'My sickness was that I was either sunk in oblivion or scattered in confusion. The medicine he gave did not match my ailment, so I was not happy.'" In other words: What T'ien-mu said was the Supreme Dharma, but my problem was that when I sat in meditation, I was either sunk in oblivion or scattered in confusion.

Ch'in continues: "'In my mind I couldn't help thinking: "You have never done meditation work. This is just clever Zen."'" The way he thought was the same as us when we go to see a teacher: if the other person's answer is not to our taste, then we think that the other person has no meditative accomplishments, and does not have the Path. But if we want everything to suit our taste, that would not be called the Path.

Ch'in continues: "'Usually when one asked for instruction, at the end one would burn a stick of incense and bow three times. This was called offering thanks. But I never lit the stick of incense.'" According to the rules of the Zen halls, in general when someone came to ask for instruction, he would bring three sticks of incense, and if things went right, he would light the incense and kneel down and bow three times, to thank the teacher for his teaching. This was the rule for monks. Hsueh-tou Ch'in just held onto the incense, and brought it back with him [without offering it to T'ien-mu].

Ch'in continues: "'I went on doing sitting meditation as I had always done before.'" He performed sitting meditation according to his usual pattern, without sleeping, his side never touching the mat.

"'At this time there were seven of the brethren in Chang-chou and Ch'uan-chou who formed a group with me to practice sitting meditation. We practiced at Pure Compassion Temple for three years, never spreading out our quilts and never letting our sides touch our mats.'" None of these seven men went all out. Of course they all swore an oath, and kept watch on each other, so no one dared to lie down.

Ch'in continues: "'There was an outsider, an advanced monk named Hsiu. He was also a man from Chang-chou, but he was not in our group. He just practiced walking and sitting meditation on his own. Every day when he was on the meditation cushion he was like an iron spike. When he was doing walking meditation, he held his spine erect, and let his arms hang down, and had his eyes open: he was like an iron spike. He followed the same pattern every day. Whenever I wanted to approach him, and talk with him a little, as soon as he saw me coming from one direction, he would go off in the other direction. Things went on like this for two years: I wanted to approach him, but I could not do so. Because for two years I had meditated intensively without success, I was suffering from drowsiness and fatigue. Day seemed like night and night seemed like day, walking seemed like sitting and sitting seemed like walking. I was rolled up in a ball of oblivion and scattering, like a lump of mud. I couldn't get an instant of clarity.'"

I feel very sorry for this sort of person. He would be lucky if he didn't get high blood pressure. He was muddled day and night, and though he wanted a bit of clarity, he could not get it at all. From a superficial viewpoint, without knowing it, he was making people respect him very much, but in his own mind he knew full well that he was like a lump of mud.

Ch'in continues: "'One day I suddenly thought to myself that I had no grasp on accomplishing the Path. (He was not succeeding in cultivating the Path.) My robe is in tatters. (He was always working in the Zen hall, and no one was supporting him with offerings.) My flesh is melting away. Without being aware of it, I started to weep, and suddenly I thought of my hometown. So I asked for a leave to return home. From this one moment of letting go, I let everything go. (By returning home and becoming comfortable, he had thrown away all his meditative accomplishments.) After two months, I reported back [to the temple]. (In later times this was called reporting back after a leave.) I also started again from the beginning to set myself straight, and I put ten times as much energy into this one letting go.'"

This is a key point. After Ch'in went home and his mama gave him good things to eat, when he returned to the temple when he started to meditate he had a hundred times as much energy, and he felt comfortable. Thus, we must pay attention to nutrition.

Ch'in continues: "'Originally I had wanted to investigate this matter of enlightenment and illuminate it. Going without sleep did not work. In the middle of the night you should sleep soundly for awhile: only then will you have energy.'"

To study the Path, you need proper nutrition, and sufficient sleep: only then will you be able to exert yourself. People ask me what I do on retreats. I sleep. Once I go into a closed room, I first sleep for seven or eight days. After this I no longer need to sleep, and as soon as I sit down, I am already working at meditation. Especially after eleven o'clock you certainly must sleep. Lie down for awhile and sleep soundly. Only then will you be able to have energy.

Ch'in continues: "'One day I was walking back and forth along the covered walkway at the temple, and I unexpectedly met Brother Hsiu. Looking upon him from afar, I felt he looked at ease and completely self-possessed. As soon as I came near him, he talked with me this time, and I knew he had attainment. I asked him: "Last year I wanted to talk to you about this, but you just avoided me. Why?" He said: "Venerable brother, a person who is truly working on the Path does not even have time to cut his nails, much less to talk to you." (A person who is really cultivating the Path doesn't even want to waste time cutting his fingernails. How could he have time to talk to you? That's why I avoided you when you sought me out.) Then he asked me what I had been doing. I recounted my experiences to him from the beginning. At the end I said: "Now I am covered by oblivion and scattering and cannot gather my mind together."

"'Hsiu said: "What's the difficulty? It's just that you are not bold enough. You must arrange a high meditation cushion and hold your spine erect, and align every one of its joints. Take all your three hundred and sixty bones, and your eighty-four thousand pores, and gather them together into the word 'No.' If you focus your attention like this, then how can you keep looking for any oblivion or scattering?'"

Hsiu rebuked Ch'in, telling him: You have not succeeded because you have not made a decisive resolve. Once you make this decisive resolve, you should arrange your meditation cushion properly, and

straighten out your backbone, and mobilize every bone in your body. Go all out, stake your life on it, or at least die trying. If you want to seek the Path, sacrifice yourself for the Path! When your whole body is sitting properly from top to bottom, abandon the myriad entangling objects and just focus on the word "No." Go on like this and pay no attention to any oblivion or scattering. Just keep on like this.

Ch'in continues: "'So then I followed what he said. I found a thick meditation cushion and put it on my mat and sat down. I held my spine erect, so all the bones lined up vertically, and aroused every bone in my body from top to bottom. My determination was just like that of a single man taking on ten thousand opponents. The more powerful my focused attention became, the more I saw it scatter. When this happened, I did my utmost to unify my attention again. Suddenly body and mind were both forgotten. (When this happened, he was not aware of body or mind.) All I saw before me was like a single expanse of silver mountain or iron wall. (Before his eyes was a single expanse of emptiness, opening up. It was what the Zen patriarch Bodhidharma said: "Mind like a wall." Empty all the way through, a single stretch of white.) From this point on it was this way whether I was walking or sitting. This state of purity lasted for three days and three nights, and during that time I never closed my eyes.'" (He did not sleep for three days and three nights.)

Ch'in continues: "'On the afternoon of the third day, I was walking through the temple gate, though it seemed as if I was sitting, and I met Brother Hsiu again. He asked me: "What are you doing here?" I answered: "Working on the Path." He said: "What are you calling 'the Path'?" I could not reply. (He could not answer this question.) I felt even more confused and depressed, and I wanted to go back to the hall and sit in meditation. I got as far as the rear gate, and without being aware of it, came to the rear hall, the monks' living quarters. (This blow by Hsiu, a man from Ch'in's hometown in Fukien, hit him very hard and made him miserable.) The head monk asked me: "How is your work on the Path going?" He told me that I should not ask other people too many questions, or else I would not be able to accomplish anything. (It was no good: the more I heard, the more I could not get on the right track in my meditation work. I understood too much.) He also said: "Just open your eyes wide, and see what truth it is." (Here when he said eyes, of course he didn't mean Ch'in's physical eyes. He was already capable of going three days and three nights without closing his eyes.)

Ch'in continues: "'Alerted by what he told me, I aroused myself, wanting to return to the meditation hall and sit. As soon as I sat down on the meditation cushion, what was in front of my eyes emptied through. It was like the ground falling away. At that point I could not tell anyone about it, or tell anyone what it was like. No worldly characteristics could describe it.'"

This time, having been buffeted from both sides by Hsiu and the head monk, Ch'in developed a sense of resolve, and ran back to the meditation hall. As soon as he sat down and crossed his legs, he instantly emptied out. It was as if the earth fell away before his eyes: the sky and the whole world were no longer there. No worldly image could describe that realm. When you study Zen and cultivate the Path, if you have not experienced this kind of suffering, then your meditative accomplishments will be unreliable.

Ch'in continues: "'At this time I felt no attachment or joy. I left the meditation seat and went looking for Brother Hsiu. He was at the sutra desk. (He was reading a sutra, not sitting in meditation.) As soon as he saw me coming he joined his palms together in a gesture of salutation and said: "I'm delighted for you." (As an expert, Hsiu knew it immediately when Ch'in had reached this realm. Before he had reached it, naturally his words and appearance did not impress anyone. But once he reached it, his look totally changed.) Then I joined hands with him, and we took a walk around the willow dike in front of the temple gate. As I looked up and down between heaven and earth at the dense array of myriad forms, my eyes saw and my ears heard, and I realized that all the things I had detested and rejected previously, and all the ignorance and affliction and oblivion and scattering, were actually all things that flowed out of the wondrously illuminated true nature.'"

At this point Ch'in had realized what it says in *The Surangama Sutra*: "[Unenlightened sentient beings] do not know that their physical bodies, and the mountains and rivers and sky and earth outside them, are all things within the wondrously illuminated true mind." All things are the spontaneous outflow from the wondrous illuminated true mind. Enlightenment and affliction are equal. You must certainly arrive at this point before you can say that "Affliction *is* enlightenment." Ordinarily affliction is affliction, and to say affliction is enlightenment is deceptive.

This account of the course of his experience of cultivating practice in those years was told by Hsueh-tou Ch'in himself to his disciple. This account was very frank and very good, so the disciple went

ahead and had it printed, offering the Dharma to the great congregation. This was an instance of carrying out vows, and all of us should prize this account.

Chin continued: "'From this point on, everything before my eyes was completely exposed and totally silent and still. For more than half a month, no signs of motion arose.'"

For half a month Ch'in was motionless in this realm. It was the same when the Ming dynasty Zen master Han-shan was enlightened after studying what it said in Seng-chao's treatise on motionlessness about the swirling mists lying around the mountain. One night Han-shan had to urinate, so he got up and went to the privy. As he urinated, he heard the tinkling sound, and at that moment, he was enlightened. Enlightened to what? In his treatise, Dharma master Seng-chao said:

> The swirling mists lie around the mountain forever still
> The rivers course along side by side without flowing.

This is the same principle as in Ch'in's experience. Here Han-shan had reached the realm where no signs of motion arise.

Pay attention, you must study this. If no signs of motion arise, surely it does not mean that this is the [great] stillness? There is still a question here.

Ch'in continues: "'Unfortunately, I had not met a venerable adept with an enlightened eye and the skillful technique to break up this realm for me.'" (Too bad at that time I had not encountered an enlightened teacher, who would have broken it up for me. Then I would have been greatly enlightened. All I can say is that my luck was not good.) I should not have settled down here. (Once I had attained stable concentration in this realm, I should not have kept on concentrating on it.) Of this it is said, "If you do not get free of your perception of truth, it blocks correct perception."'"

Having reached this point, Hsueh-tou Ch'in had witnessed a bit of the scene of enlightenment. If an enlightened teacher had been present at this point, Ch'in would have penetrated through this. Who told him to avoid an enlightened teacher? What could an enlightened teacher have done with him anyway? He thought that this was enlightenment, and had accepted the dead rat of stillness as the precious message, so what could be done about him? He was hurting himself. He kept on sitting and settled down in this realm, and did not get free of his perception of truth. Pay attention to this point. Later on, if there

is no enlightened teacher by your side, this book will be your enlightened teacher. At this point, if you just hold onto the stillness, this is what *The Hua-yen Sutra* meant when it said: "The Buddha Triumph of Great Pervasive Wisdom sat for ten eons on the site of enlightenment, and the Buddha Dharma did not appear before him, and he was unable to achieve the Buddha Path." This is the same principle. Many people who study Esoteric Buddhism, or Taoism, or Zen get to this point and then bury themselves alive. But we are not even able to reach this point. Here Zen master Ch'in expresses his regrets, but after all he was a great teacher of the age, and was really extraordinary.

Ch'in continues: "'But whenever I was sleeping at night, in a state without dreams or thoughts or hearing or seeing, it was broken into two.'" (This realm was good, but when he was asleep it wasn't there anymore. When he woke up and worked at it, then it was there again. Isn't this a dichotomy? When there is no dreaming and no thinking, where is the master? How could this realm not be there?) The ancients spoke of being the same whether awake or asleep, but I had not penetrated through to this. (He says: For the ancients, being asleep and being awake were both the same, but I have not been able to accomplish this. When I'm sleeping I'm sleeping, and this realm is only there when I wake up.) I had completely misunderstood the saying: "If the eyes do not sleep, dreams are spontaneously eliminated. If the mind does not deviate, the myriad phenomena are one suchness."'" (This is from the Third Patriarch's "Inscription of the Mind of Faith." Ch'in says that when he used the principle in these lines to do his meditation work, and rigidly refused to sleep, he was misunderstanding what the Patriarch said.)

Ch'in continues: "'I could understand any of the meditation cases of the ancients that had a rational line that I could sink my teeth into. (I understood all the meditation cases of the ancients that could be interpreted rationally.) But those which had no rational line, like the saying "Silver mountain, iron wall," I could not understand at all.'" When he read through *The Record of Pointing at the Moon*, and *The Transmission of the Lamp*, he could not understand those meditation cases that had no rational principles. How could this be called enlightenment? He had great wisdom, so he could alert himself to this first. He is saying: If I were enlightened, I would comprehend everything. How is it that I do not understand these?

Ch'in continues: "'I spent several years in the congregation of my late teacher Wu-chun. Every time he instructed me, he brought up the meditation saying "Where is the master?" and I made a leap

forward. But he told me: "Don't have me bring up the mastery of the patchrobed monks, or the claws and teeth of the buddhas and ancestral teachers, or there will be no way for you to say anything." Sometimes Wu-chun was in the teacher's seat talking of this and that, and nothing at all of what he said touched on the concerns that were in my mind.'"

Here Ch'in is saying: At the time I studied Zen in Wu-chun's congregation for many years. Whenever I met him and he brought up the meditation case "Where is the master?" I seemed to understand. The old master said: "Your understanding of this has made another step forward—made a leap forward. Though you understand this principle, you still have not understood the true crucial point of the Zen masters and buddhas, and you have not awakened." Sometimes when the old teacher was in the teacher's seat talking, nothing he said touched what was in my own mind.

Ch'in continues: "'Again I investigated the Buddhist scriptures and the sayings of the ancients from the beginning. (There was nothing else to do, so he searched through the scriptures.) But there was no statement in them that could resolve this illness of mind. (None of them could resolve his own question: "When there are no dreams and no thoughts, where is the master?" Nowadays some people think they can answer this by saying that when there are no dreams and no thoughts, the master is right within no dreams and no thoughts. How simple that would be! If at that time you cannot find the master, it won't do. It doesn't count as enlightenment.) This went on blocking me inside for almost ten years.'"

Ch'in kept on coming to grips with this question in his mind, but he could not resolve it. Other people in Wu-chun's assembly were concentrating on cultivating this, and studying this thing. Ch'in spent ten more years there, and this was blocking his mind all along.

Chin continues: "'Later I went to Tung-che province with Chung-shih Liang, and we made our abode on the twin mountains of T'ien-mu. (The two of them lived on Mount T'ien-mu.) One day, while walking at leisure in front of the buddha-shrine, thinking of this and that, suddenly I looked up and saw an ancient pine tree. The realm I had attained in the past and that I had been stuck on all at once totally lifted, and the thing that had been blocking me inside crumbled and dispersed. It was like coming out of a dark room into the sunlight.'"

This time, Ch'in was enlightened. After studying this question for ten years, he had gone with a companion in the Path to stay at T'ien-mu. One day, as he was walking in front of the buddha-shrine, suddenly he raised his eyes and looked up, and he saw a pine tree, and awakened all at once. The thing in his mind that he had previously not been able to resolve was suddenly abandoned, and the depression in his breast suddenly opened up. It was like spending ten years shut up in a dark room, and suddenly opening the door and seeing the sky. This was his enlightenment experience.

Chin continues: "'From then on, I was no longer in doubt about birth and death and the buddhas and patriarchs. Only then did I see where the old man of Ching-shan was at. (Only then did he see why his old teacher on Mount Ching-shan in Hangchow, when he had really awakened to the Path, only knew it when he went back to see the old man of Ching-shan.) I deserved thirty blows. Why so? If I had been a man of great power and great capacity, why would I have followed such a tortuous path to enlightenment?'" (He says he was too stupid, so he had to study for thirty years before he awakened. If he had been a man of great capacity, he wouldn't have had to suffer so much.)

Ch'in continues: "'When Teh-shan saw Lung-t'an, Lung-t'an blew out a candle, and Teh-shan said: "Having exhausted all abstruse arguments, they are like a fine hair placed in the sky. Having ended all worldly machinations, they are like a drop of water thrown into an abyss." (When Master Teh-shan met Lung-t'an, that evening Master Lung-t'an took a candle and blew it out, at which point Teh-shan was enlightened. How quickly he awakened! These are the words Teh-shan said upon awakening to the Path.) From then on Teh-shan took up his cudgel and set heaven and earth in motion. How could you approach him! (After Teh-shan was enlightened, he took up his stick to beat people. How could you get near him!) When Master Shui-liao was kicked by Ma-tsu, he said: "On the tip of a hair I recognize the source of the hundreds and thousands of Dharma Gates, and the countless wondrous meanings." Kao-t'ing saw Teh-shan beckoning to him, and immediately hastened toward him. If you younger people who have entered the Path late want to study this affair, and move toward this affair, you must have this kind of quality and this kind of mettle to succeed.'"

These are all cases of the ancients that Ch'in cites here. Kao-t'ing came to see Teh-shan to ask about the Path. Teh-shan happened to be standing in the temple gate. It was just about dark. He saw a monk far off coming toward him, and he beckoned to him with his hand.

Kao-t'ing turned and began to run toward him. In the time it took Teh-shan to wave, Kao-t'ing was enlightened, and started running toward him. Ch'in says that the ancients were this sharp, and if you younger people want to learn the Path, you too need the kind of spirit and the kind of capacity that the ancients had to succeed.

Ch'in continues: "'Don't try to memorize any of what I've said. If you memorize it, it will mislead you all through your lives. (If you memorize what you've heard me say, it may poison you, it may lead you astray throughout your lives. Nevertheless, I have told you the whole of my experience of leaving home and cultivating the Path.) That's why the great adepts usually do not speak of what they have done or their perception of truth in the gate of enlightenment. They call this binding people with genuine teachings which they cannot digest.'" (Why were the sage worthies among the ancients unwilling to tell about their own course of cultivating practice? If later on you take what I have told you today, and cultivate practice by totally imitating the methods I followed, this would not be correct. I have just told you about the stupid path I traveled. Do not follow it yourselves!)

Ch'in continues: "'This is certainly right. Some people have great strength and have seeds of affinity with the teaching of enlightenment from past lives. Their enlightenment does not come from what they do, and they have no shortcuts they can explain. There are also those who have never done any meditation work, and cannot talk about it. There are also some who are unripe, and who don't even believe what they say themselves.'" (People's basic capacities differ. Some people of superior capacity have never studied Buddhism in their lives, but as soon as they hear the Dharma, they awaken. There are also people who have done no meditation work at all, and though they may understand the Dharma in theory, are incapable of spreading it. There are also the half-baked type, who open their mouths without even believing what they say themselves.)

Ch'in continues: "'It is truly said that slightly different characters resemble each other, and yet are not the same. As for practicing this affair, it is like a man traveling a road. If he has traveled a mile or two, he can talk about a mile or two. Only when he has traveled a thousand or ten thousand miles, can he talk about a thousand or ten thousand miles. To succeed, you must each possess an enlightened eye, and choose between the ripe and the unripe. Otherwise, even if you pass through the bellies of the buddhas and ancestral teachers, it will do you no good.'"

From this account you can see a case of how meditation work was done in the Zen School from the Yuan and Ming period on. The cases selected by Shih Ch'eng-chin in *The Zen School's Direct Pointing: The Great Matter* are very much worth reading. They cannot be counted as especially brilliant, but they are very down-to-earth and genuine.

In the following section of this lecture, we will now discuss the case of Zen master Kao-feng Miao for some insights. Kao-feng Miao lived in the Yuan period, when Lamaism, Tibetan Buddhism, entered China under the patronage of the Mongol rulers. This is when the era of Zen predominance in Chinese Buddhism ended.

Kao-feng Miao knew that the Yuan Emperor would invite him to come to court, so he slipped away and went to Mount T'ien-mu in Hangchow, and announced that he was going into retreat until death, and that he would not leave the mountain before he died. His learning was excellent, but even so, in the end he died of stomach disease. The highest point reached in the Zen School was recognizing the *dharmakaya*. Whether or not the Zen masters achieved the *sambhogakaya* and *nirmanakaya* is a big question. But if you do not achieve the *dharmakaya*, then your perception of truth is not clear and you cannot talk of cultivating practice. Thus the Fifth Patriarch said to the Sixth Patriarch, "If you do not see fundamental true nature, cultivating the Dharma will bring no benefit." So all [Zen masters] saw fundamental true nature. Thus in Hsueh-tou Ch'in's account, he explains very thoroughly the principle of seeing *dharmakaya* and the principle of making all out efforts in meditation work, but he includes nothing about the *sambhogakaya* and the *nirmanakaya*.

So here is the case of Kao-feng Miao from Shih Ch'eng-chin's book *The Zen School's Direct Pointing: The Great Matter:*

"When Miao was twenty, he became a monk and entered Pure Compassion Temple. He set a rigid limit of three years to learn Zen. One day his father and elder brother came to visit him, but he acted aloof and took no notice of them." (He left home at twenty to work on studying Zen. His father and brother came to see him, but he didn't even look at them.)

"At twenty-two Miao asked Master Lun of Broken Bridge for instruction, and he instructed him to study the meditation saying 'Where do you come from when you're born and where do you go when you die?' From then on Miao never lay down to sleep. He forgot both his mouth and his body. Sometimes he went out with only his underwear on if going to the privy, and sometimes he would open

the chest and go out forgetting to lock it." (When he was twenty-two, Miao studied with Zen master Lun of Broken Bridge, who had him study a meditation saying. Miao studied tirelessly day and night without sleeping or resting.)

"At the time, one of his fellow students, the monk Hsien was moved by Miao's zeal and said: 'I myself cannot accomplish this task. It would be better to help him succeed.' So he protected and supported Miao day and night very diligently." (At this time one of his companions in the Path was moved by Miao's spirit of energetic progress and hard work, and he volunteered to provide support for him.)

"At this time Hsueh-tou Ch'in was living at Pei-chien Stupa on Mount T'ien-mu. Taking incense with him, Miao gladly went to visit Ch'in. As soon as Miao had addressed a question to him, Ch'in drove him out with blows and shut his door. Miao only got to approach him after going there repeatedly. Ch'in ordered him to contemplate the word 'No,' and from then on Miao visited Ch'in every day without fail." (When Miao first went to visit Hsueh-tou Ch'in as soon as he opened his mouth, he was driven out with blows. After Miao had tried to see him several times, Ch'in finally instructed him to contemplate the meditation saying "No.")

"One day Ch'in suddenly asked him: 'Who dragged this dead corpse here for you?' Before Ch'in had even finished his question, he immediately hit Miao. This happened who knows how many times, but Miao was even more earnest in calling on him for instruction."

"When Ch'in went to Nan-ming Temple to attend to affairs there, Miao went to Shuang-ching and sat in meditation for half a month."

"In a dream Miao happened suddenly to remember a meditation case that Master Lun had brought up to him in his room at Broken Bridge: 'The myriad phenomena return to one: what does the one return to?' A feeling of doubt was suddenly generated in him, and for three days and nights he did not close his eyes. One day, on Bodhidharma's birthday, while Miao was accompanying the congregation to visit the three stupas and chant sutras, he looked up and suddenly saw the words written on the portrait of Master Wu-tsu Yen: 'One hundred years, thirty-six thousand days / Going back and forth, it was this guy all along.' Suddenly he broke through the doubts he had felt [over Ch'in's question] 'Who is dragging this corpse here?' (He was enlightened!) That year he was twenty-four.

"At the end of the summer retreat, Miao went to Nan-ming Temple. (He went to see Master Hseuh-tou Ch'in.) As soon as he saw him, Ch'in asked: 'Who has dragged this dead corpse here for you?' Miao then gave a shout. Ch'in picked up his stick. (The old monk saw him shout, and reached for his stick, to drive him out with blows.) Miao held him tight and said: 'Today you cannot hit me.' (Today you cannot hit me, you would be hitting the wrong man!) Ch'in said: 'Why not?' Miao shook out his sleeves and left. (This is how he answered Hsueh-tou Ch'in. In other words he was showing that he was enlightened.)

"The next day, Ch'in asked him: 'The myriad phenomena return to one: what does the one return to?' Miao said: 'The dog is licking a pot of hot oil.' (This question is like a dog trying to lick a pot of hot oil. The dog extends his tongue, his saliva is dripping down. It is too hot to taste, but it smells so good, he cannot bring himself to leave.) Ch'in said to him: 'Where did you learn this empty head?' Miao said: 'Precisely so you would doubt.' (Miao rebuked his teacher, telling him, I just want you to feel doubt toward me.) Ch'in let it go at that. (The old monk paid no more attention to him.) From then on, Miao did not yield to Ch'in in sharpness.

"The following year Miao spent the summer at Chiang Hsin Temple. One day, Ch'in asked him: 'In the vast flow of daily activities, can you act the master?' Miao said: 'I can.' Ch'in also asked: 'Can you act the master in dreams?' Miao said: 'I can.' Ch'in also asked: 'When you are asleep, and there are no dreams and no thoughts and no seeing and no hearing, where is the master?' Miao said nothing. (That's it, he was stumped: he could not act the master here. During the day, when he was awake, he knew where states of mind arose and thoughts moved. When he should have lost his temper he thought: "Hey! That's not right," and he got rid of his anger. Though he held it down very painfully, in the end he mastered it. When he was dreaming, he could also act the master. He was terrific. But what about when there were no dreams and no thoughts? His teacher stumped him with this question. Kao-feng Miao had thought he was enlightened, so when his teacher took his stick to hit him, he grabbed his teacher's stick and wouldn't let him. Miao had been so proud of himself, so self-confident, but now he had nothing to say.)

"Ch'in instructed him: 'From now on, I don't want you to study the Buddha Dharma, and I don't want you to investigate the ancient and modern Zen masters' sayings. Just eat when hunger comes and sleep when you are tired. When you wake up, mobilize your energy and ponder this: "When I wake up like this, ultimately where does the

master put his body and establish his life?'"" (The old teacher was compassionate. He knew that the way he had treated Miao before was useless, so now he changed tactics and addressed him with delicate words.)

"In the winter of 1326, Miao mobilized his will, and went to Dragon Beard Temple in Lin-an. He swore to himself: 'I may be a stupid idiot my whole life, but this time I am determined to understand.'"

Look how hard the ancients practiced, yet you have not awakened here. Very well then, when you go to the hospital, and they bring the oxygen, and at the end your breath does not come, where will you put your body and your life? Will you still be there or not? If you do not awaken here, you have studied in vain! All day long you chant the name of Amitabha Buddha. If someone hits you, it's all right, you still have Amitabha Buddha. If someone pushes you, there's still Amitabha Buddha, and you don't get mad. At night when you're dreaming, how bothersome, you don't have Amitabha Buddha there anymore, and in your dreams you lose your temper as usual, and greed, anger, and ignorances all come to you. Even if you can act the master in dreams, where are you when you have no dreams and no thoughts? If you cannot act the master, you have studied Buddhism in vain.

How compassionate Master Ch'in was when he used such delicate words to Mao. Master Ch'in was himself a person who had experienced the same thing.

We must investigate how we fall asleep and how we wake up. If you say you know how you fall asleep, at that moment you are certainly not asleep. If you say you know how you wake up, at that moment you have already awakened. This is a scientific question. Only when you are clear about this can you completely comprehend where you come from when you are born and where you go when you die. After that you can come and go as you please within the six planes of cyclical existence, you can enter and leave the three realms and the six planes of existence at will. You can even go play in hell: it won't matter as long as you have this ability. Thus Kao-feng Miao mobilized his will, and renewed his resolve, and decided that he must understand this matter clearly.

The account continues: "It happened that an old friend of his pushed a headrest and it fell on the floor and made a sound: at this Miao emptied through in great penetrating enlightenment." When

the head rest dropped to the ground with a thump, Miao penetrated through in great enlightenment. Only then did he realize where the master is when there are no dreams and no thoughts. Is the master in the headrest? You should go back and investigate and see for yourselves.

"Miao said it was like Szu-chou seeing Ta-sheng: when the man who has traveled far returns to his hometown, he is actually the same man he was before and he has not changed the way he walked before." (I am still me, but not the same me as before. I am entirely different. The way my mind works, my personality, and the way I do things are all different.)

"Miao stayed at Dragon Beard Temple for nine years. He built a simple hut of sticks. The wind blew through it and the sun scorched it. Winter and summer he wore the same patched robe, and he never fanned himself to keep cool in summer or lit the stove to get warm in winter. Everyday he pounded pine nuts to make a paste to eat and took a long rest. Once the snow piled up so deep it buried his hut, and for a fortnight the road was cut off and no smoke could be seen coming from his direction, and everyone thought he was dead. But when the weather cleared and people could get in to him, Miao was sitting upright in *samadhi*."

This is the case of Zen master Kao-feng Miao in several sections. People who study Zen and do meditation work should take note of the five main points I mentioned before which are very relevant to studying Zen and doing meditation work and very important.

They are particularly important nowadays when so many people like to talk about Zen. Zen is not about talk, Zen is about cultivation. Everyone must proceed from this. Certainly Ma-tsu was suddenly enlightened under the impact of his teacher's words, but this still came from the basis he had built up over many years of sitting meditation at the southern holy mountain Heng-shan. Present day people cannot even tame their two legs: how can they talk of taming their minds? You must take inspiration from how the ancients exerted themselves, and not speak too quickly.

These stories of Hsueh-tou Ch'in and Kao-feng Miao give the correct model for studying Zen and doing meditation work and cultivating *samadhi*. But I will give this frank conclusion: Even if they could comprehend the *dharmakaya*, there is still the question of the *sambhogakaya* and *nirmanakaya*. Therefore, in China many scholars have said that the Zen School easily goes into the Hinayana path, the

path of the lesser vehicle. This use of the term "lesser vehicle" does not mean lesser in regard to practice alone; the Zen School easily follows the road of the lesser vehicle in seeing truth, cultivating realization, and the gate of practice as well. The *sambhogakaya* and the *nirmanakaya* must be completed and perfected, and this is certainly not easy.

Many eminent monks in the Ming dynasty were like Kao-feng Miao: they carried out the same kind of austerities, they were just as firm and indomitable, and they had the same extraordinary qualities. All of them were preserving the right energy on behalf of the Chinese people after all was lost. Kao-feng Miao knew that because of his fame at the time, the Yuan dynasty would certainly invite him to court, so he made haste to flee. His disciple, the famous Zen master Chung-feng, obeyed his command and would not consent to appear in court to serve as the Yuan dynasty's national teacher. Kao-feng did not respond to any of the imperial invitations, and even Chung-feng went into hiding. The great teachers of this line only appeared publicly after the Ming dynasty had begun. This is another meditation case in history, culture, and the history of Buddhism.

But observe their spirit, their quality: they were all special people. We today cannot possibly hope to match them. Kao-feng lived in a broken-down thatched hut, and made himself a bit of nut paste everyday, thinking it was enough if he could survive. He was shut in by a snow storm for more than ten days, and could not cook, and everyone thought he was dead. But in the end, after more than ten days, when the snow stopped, people ran up to see him, and he was still in *samadhi*, sitting upright! Thus it is said, "Sudden enlightenment at a word—that was the ancients, not us."

Now let's continue with *The Yogacarabhumi Shastra*, volume 13, the third section of part six on the stage of *samahita*.

On cultivating *samadhi*, the shastra says: "Next, as the World-Honored One said, in cultivating *samadhi*, some people have the skill in equalizing, but not the skill of being equally focused." These words were spoken by the Bodhisattva Maitreya. Naturally they were recorded by the Bodhisattva Asanga.

People cultivating *samadhi* uphold concentration and wisdom equally and cultivate them both. In terms of the methods of cultivation used by modern day people, it is like the joint cultivation of Zen and Esoteric Buddhism, or the joint cultivation of Zen and Pure Land Buddhism, or the joint cultivation of cessation and contemplation along with reciting the buddha-name. This is skill in equalizing. The

skill of being equally focused means following the road of concentrating on one point.

The shastra continues: "What is skill in equalizing practices? It means being skillful in the three kinds of *samadhi*, the *samadhi* of emptiness, the *samadhi* of formlessness, and the *samadhi* of wishlessness." *Samadhi* is genuinely realizing emptiness, experiencing the realm of inherent emptiness. There is false emptiness and true emptiness. What Zen master Ch'in described as rigidly repressing thoughts, so you feel empty when you look—that is false emptiness. Rigidly suppressing the sixth consciousness is not real emptiness.

The shastra continues: "What does it mean that these people don't have the skill of being equally focused? It means that they are not skilled at being equally focused on excellent states, on partial states, and on states of total extinction." "Excellent states" means the best experiential realms. "Partial states" means that the realm of emptiness is one-sided, and is not perfect and complete. Skilled means having skillful means. Here the shastra is saying that if you want to enter these realms, enter them right away. It should not be a chance occurrence, like us blind cats bumping into dead rats.

The shastra continues: "What is the skill of being equally focused and not the skill of equalizing? It means to be focused on the ten kinds of omnipresence, and the state without thoughts.

"What is abiding? It means being good at holding onto and being able to enter all the stages of *samadhi*, and all its practices and forms. Because you are good at holding onto these, you can abide in *samadhi* as you wish, and you never fall back and lose it again. Dwelling in *samadhi* like this, and not falling back and losing it, are both called abiding."

What does the realm of abiding mean? What does it mean to enter *samadhi*, to abide in *samadhi*, to emerge from *samadhi*? The previous section explains how to enter the realm of *samadhi*, and after you have entered it, how to be able to stay in it. This must depend on us being clear in our theoretical knowledge, and recognizing clearly the practices for entering *samadhi* (the psychological practices) and its forms (the forms of the experiential realms of *samadhi*).

"Because you are good at holding onto these, " the shastra says. Entering *samadhi* and abiding in *samadhi* are not without attachment to forms. There is a bit of attachment to forms, but this is not ordinary people's attachment to forms. It is the clinging to forms involved in staying in that realm of *samadhi*. Once you attain *samadhi*, of course you abide in its form. In this abiding in form, you must do what the

shastra says: "Because you are good at holding onto these, you can abide in *samadhi* as you wish, and you never fall back and lose it again." You see the joy you feel toward this realm of *samadhi*, and you stay in this realm of *samadhi*. This joy is not the joy of afflictions and false thoughts, it is seeing our present needs.

Suppose you are on the meditation seat today, and false thoughts and miscellaneous thoughts are especially numerous, and as Zen Master Ch'in said, you are both scattered in confusion and sinking down into oblivion. Then you must understand what skill to use and what method to use to be able to get rid of this scattering and oblivion. Here, in terms of Chinese culture, there are three possibilities: *ching* vitality, *ch'i* energy, and *shen* spirit. The three are not the same. You must investigate and determine if there is so much scattering and affliction today due to physiological reasons. For example, women all have phenomena arising from their monthly cycles. What methods should they use to be able to rid themselves of afflictions, and enter the realm of peace and ease? In reality men also have a cycle, but it is not as easy to recognize it.

There are other examples. You may have eaten something and gotten indigestion. Or maybe today your *ch'i* channels are not being properly guided. This can make you terribly restless, and overheated, and it becomes so unbearable that you want to kill yourself. So when someone sits down to meditate, he can go into the fire or into demonic realms, and situations like these are not very different.

To use some method and skillfully treat these problems and enable yourself to enter and abide in the realm of *samadhi*, is called a Dharma Gate of applying a remedy. So cultivating practice is not a matter of using the same medicine all the time. It is not like those medicines that can be used for all sorts of problems. This applies to the physiological part. Sometimes, it is a question of *ching* vitality. This includes the physical problems brought about by too much or too little nutrition. Sometimes it is a question of *ch'i* energy. When the energy channels are not right, and the various energy flows are not properly regulated, it influences the internal organs, and causes problems. Sometimes it is a psychological question, that is, a question of *shen* "spirit." The mental state can be very depressed from receiving a blow, and depression is a major affliction. With all these problems, you must know the remedy. If you do not know the remedy, every day when you do meditation work, every step you take will be like walking on thorns. It will all be useless, and you will be going backwards. So you have to develop the ability to apply the appropriate remedy when it is due.

8

ENTERING, ABIDING AND LEAVING *SAMADHI*

Illuminating mind and seeing true nature means seeing the *dharmakaya*. When your cultivation reaches the point that you are fully equipped with the six spiritual powers, and the three buddha-bodies and the four wisdoms of the buddhas, and the thirty-two marks of a buddha, and the eighty good qualities of a buddha, this is the completion of the *sambhogakaya*. When your cultivation reaches the point that you can manifest hundreds of millions of transformation bodies, this is the accomplishment of the *nirmanakaya*.

Many of the teachers of the Zen School managed to see the *dharmakaya*, but they did not necessarily achieve the *sambhogakaya* and the *nirmanakaya*. Among the twenty-eight Zen patriarchs in India, and the Zen patriarchs in China before the Fifth and Sixth Patriarch, some of them achieved all three buddha-bodies, but after the Sixth Patriarch those who achieved all three buddha-bodies were very few.

Before, when I mentioned the previous births of the Dharma master K'uei-chi, that had nothing to do with the three buddha-bodies. The ordinary person who attains *samadhi* can always bring forth the *yin* spirit. The *yin* spirit is not the *dharmakaya*: it is still in the realm of false thoughts, still within the realm of the power of karma. You can bring forth the *yin* spirit in any of the four *dhyanas*: you can accomplish this even in the first *dhyana*.

An arhat can go in and out through a keyhole. This is a spiritual power: it has nothing to do with the three buddha-bodies. For example, the living Buddha Chi-kung was in the realm of the great arhats, in the vehicle of the solitary illuminates. He was still not in the realm of the great bodhisattvas.

What people who have awakened to the Path by illuminating mind and seeing true nature attain is fundamental wisdom. But they do not necessarily have differentiating wisdom. They can see inherent nature. But to be able to function from inherent nature, and be able to perfect all merits and achievements—that is really not easy.

In cultivation, if your aspiration is not as high as the *dharmakaya*, but you still want to attain health and long life, you must see to it that you go and study Lu Ch'un-yang's *Hundred Word Inscription.*

Lu Ch'un-yang was enlightened through Zen. Later he obeyed the command of Zen master Huang-lung Nan, and served forever lifetime after lifetime as an outside protector of Buddhism. Lu Ch'un-yang failed to win success and fame through the official examinations. Later on he dreamed of ripe grain, and after he woke up, he left home. He cultivated Taoism, and was very famous in the period of the end of the T'ang and the Five Dynasties. He refined his energy-work to a very high level, and he could fly through the air. He wrote a famous two-line verse:

There's a jewel in the field of elixir:
    stop seeking the Path
Face objects without mind:
    don't ask about Zen.

If people in general could reach this level, they wouldn't be talking about health and long life: they would be able to banish sickness and extend their lives forever without getting old. Of course the methods of cultivating practice contained in these two lines are very significant.

One time, Lu Ch'un-yang flew off holding a jeweled sword in his mouth, and crossed over Mount Lu in Kiangsi. This was the site of a big temple, the Zen School's Huang-lung Temple. As Lu Ch'un-yang was flying past high above, he saw that the energy-pattern on this mountain was unusual, and he knew there must be a man of lofty attainments there.

Lu Ch'un-yang descended and saw that it was Huang-lung Temple. There was a man there lecturing on the sutras: this was Zen master Huang-lung Nan, a great worthy of the Lin-chi School of Zen. Lu Ch'un-yang stood off to one side looking on for quite a while. He felt it was very strange: this Zen master did not emit light or move the earth or show any other ability like that. He was an ordinary monk. How was it that so many people were listening to him then? The more he looked, the stranger it seemed, so he just stood there. Zen master Huang-lung Nan stopped expounding the Dharma and said: "In the audience there is someone spying on the Dharma." He knew there was someone there listening surreptitiously.

Lu Ch'un-yang did not put up with this kind of talk, so he stood up. Huang-lung Nan asked him who he was, and he told him his name. Huang-lung Nan said: "Oh! After all, it's you. I thought you were something special, but actually you are only a ghost guarding a corpse." (You can make this body live forever without getting old: you are holding onto it tightly.) As soon as Lu Ch'un-yang heard this, he got angry and said: "A real man can possess the medicine of ageless eternal life. What is this ordinary man's fleshly body of yours worth?" Huang-lung Nan replied: "Even if you can survive for eighty thousand eons, in the end you fall into empty annihilation."

Lu Ch'un-yang was annoyed at this response, so he lifted his sleeves, and sent forth his flying sword, deliberately trying to frighten the old monk. He didn't know that the flying sword would stop in front of the old monk's face, then turn around, and fly back to threaten him. Lu was surprised and thought: "This monk is an ordinary man, isn't he? If he has no meditative attainments, why is it that my sword does not obey my command?"

Later people studied this as a meditation case. Was it the spirits who protect the Dharma who deflected the flying sword? Or was it the power of Huang-lung Nan's transcendental wisdom? Or was there some other basic cause? Ultimately, what was the reason for this?

Huang-lung Nan laughed and said to Lu: "You don't have to resort to these methods. A minute ago you said you have real ability. I ask you, what truth have you seen?" Lu Ch'un-yang said: "A single grain of millet contains the world. The mountains and rivers are cooking in a pan." This is a statement about the Path: he is talking about the truth he saw when he saw the Path. Huang-lung Nan said: "I'll not ask you how to cook the mountains and rivers. But how can a single grain of millet contain the world?" The two went on this way, bandying back and forth. Through the conversation, Lu Ch'un-yang finally became enlightened, and made a verse:

I throw away the gourd container and drop the
    shattered zither
Right now I don't long for the gold in the mercury
After I once saw Huang-lung
I finally realized that I had always been
    using mind wrongly.

At that time, for the Taoists to bring forth an enlightened person like Lu Ch'un-yang was like the Zen School producing a Sixth Patriarch.

To find out how to cultivate health and long life, you should consult Lu Ch'un-yang's "The Hundred Word Inscription." This is one of the best products of the "Three Teachings," Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism. It is also very good for studying Buddhism.

The Hundred Word Inscription

To nurture the vital energy, the ch'i,
keep watch without words
To subdue the mind, act without acting
Recognize the patriarch in movement and stillness
There is nothing to be concerned about:
who else are you seeking?
What's true and eternal must respond to beings
To respond to beings you must not be deluded
If you are not deluded, real nature remains by itself
When real nature remains, vital energy returns by itself
When vital energy returns, the elixir spontaneously forms
In the vessel the fire [of conditioned awareness] and the water [of primordial awareness] are matched
Yin and *yang* are born in succession
Universal transformation rolls like thunder
White clouds cover the peak in the morning
Sweet dew sprinkles down on Sumeru
Drink for yourself the wine of immortality
As you roam free, no one will know
Sit and listen to the tune of the zither without strings
Clearly comprehend the working of creation
It's all in these twenty lines
A true ladder straight to heaven.

Nurturing the *ch'i*, the vital energy, the breath of life, is the true meditation work of cultivating the breath as it moves in and out that is part of the teaching of the ten forms of mindfulness.

To say "subduing the mind" comes from *The Diamond Sutra*, which speaks of "subduing one's mind." As for "act without acting," if you deliberately subdue the mind you are attached to forms. But inherent nature is fundamentally empty, so it acts without acting. This tells us about both seeing truth and meditation work.

The two lines about movement and stillness put in the Bodhisattva Kuan-shih-yin's Dharma Gate of perfect penetration are: "The two forms, movement and stillness, are completely unborn." But if you are not sunk in oblivion, or scattered in confusion, you yourself can be the master of movement and stillness and empty them out. Don't seek any other method.

To deal with people and handle situations, you must be able not to go against your fundamental nature. Here in the fifth and sixth lines, the verse is talking about meditation work.

You do not have to do any work: mind and energy are joined together, and mind and things have one single source. When thoughts have truly been emptied out, "vital energy returns by itself." You can spontaneously stop the energy channels, and reach the second and third *dhyanas*.

Here in the verse, when he talks of elixir, it is not that there really is such a thing in the belly. The ancient Taoists described the elixir as like the moon, a round point within, to represent the point of perfect, inherently awake, spiritually illuminated, enlightened nature. The vessel represents the body, the transformative functioning of your own energy channels. You only have to manage to stop your energy channels, and they will spontaneously undergo a transformation.

After this spontaneous *samadhi* has continued for a long time, "Universal transformation rolls like thunder." With a peel of thunder, all the energy channels in your body open. At this point, it is exactly as Chuang-tzu said: "You move back and forth with the spirit of heaven and earth." You are one body with the universe. At this point, the central channel is really opened.

"White clouds cover the peak in the morning." This at last is the true initiation, the true anointing, of the esoteric school. You are anointed with the light of the wisdom of all the buddhas and bodhisattvas. In the verse Sumeru means your head. The great bliss chakra on the top of your head suddenly opens. At this point, you will certainly have eternal life without growing old. This is the supreme worldly dharma.

"The tune of the zither without strings" stands for the Bodhisattva Kuan-shih-yin "entering samadhi by means of hearing, contemplating, and cultivating practice."

Each of the twenty lines of the verse has five characters, making a hundred characters altogether, so the verse is called "The Hundred Word Inscription." These twenty lines recount the whole process of

going from an ordinary person, through cultivating eternal ageless life, to the point of transcending the realm of ordinary people and entering the realm of the sages. Every line relates both to seeing truth and to meditation work.

For example, at the beginning, everyone wants to attain *samadhi*. Why can't you do it? It is because you cannot accomplish what is indicated in the first line: "To nurture the vital energy, the *ch'i*, keep watch without words." Who can do the work of nurturing the vital energy to the point that there are no false thoughts at all? Thoughts are very numerous, and though you try to keep watch over them, you cannot hold them still. You are even less able to accomplish what is indicated in the second line: "To subdue the mind, act without acting." If you cannot do this, you can't even talk of what follows.

When you sit meditating in stillness, you have a bit of a shadow of attainment, but as soon as you stop meditating, you have nothing at all. Fundamentally you have not been able to recognize the patriarch. It is very important to recognize the patriarch in both motion and stillness. Who can have stillness in his mind all day long without concerns?

The spirituality illuminated enlightened nature is always present. The energy spontaneously returns: it does not call on us to work at it. The elixir forms by itself. It is something natural, something that is inherently present in our lives.

You should not use a sectarian point of view when you look at this *Hundred Word Inscription*. Lu Ch'un-yang in addition to being a Taoist adept, was also a great Dharma protector of the Zen School, one of the disciples of Huang-lung Nan who truly attained to his Dharma. If you want health and long life, and proceed according to what he said, that will certainly be enough.

Now I will continue talking about the sections of *The Yogacarabhumi Shastra* with a bearing on cultivating *samadhi*. In the last lecture I quoted this:

"What is abiding? It means being good at holding onto and being able to enter all the stages of *samadhi*, and all its practices and forms. Because you are good at holding onto these, you can abide in *samadhi* as you wish, and you never fall back and lose it again. Dwelling in *samadhi* like this, and not falling back and losing it, are both called abiding."

What does abiding mean? First you must select a method that is suitable for your own basic capacity. Due to differences in basic

capacity and the force of karma, the applicability of the same kind of methods will also differ. In other words, if you pick a method that is adapted to your own body and mind, then it will be easy to enter the realm of *samadhi*. Because "you are good at holding onto these," good at holding onto a suitably chosen method, "as you wish," if you want to enter a certain kind of realm, then you will enter that realm. If you can also maintain it without falling back, then this is called entering *samadhi*. If you can enter the realm of *samadhi* without falling back, this is called "abiding in *samadhi*."

The shastra continues: "What is leaving? It means that once you have the ability to enter *samadhi* and all its practices and forms, there is no further thinking. Intentional thinking arises among all the differentiated bodies and forms that are not the stage of *samadhi*, including the phenomena that are not like the stage of *samadhi*, and you emerge from *samadhi*. You leave *samadhi* on the basis of following your actions, or on the basis of determining your actions, or on the basis of planning your actions. Following your actions means all activities you do such as repairing and taking care of your robe and bowl. Determining your actions means all activities you do such as eating and drinking and seeking convenience and gain, and serving teachers and elders. Planning your actions means all the activities you do when you set a time in advance, or when you have consented to act on someone else's behalf, or when you want to change and enter some other *samadhi*. Due to these causal conditions, you leave *samadhi*."

What does it mean to leave *samadhi*? When you have reached the condition of abiding in *samadhi*, you do not arouse any differentiating thoughts. However, suddenly a thought comes. Where did this thought come from? You yourself cannot find out at all. Abruptly a thought arises, at odds with the realm of *samadhi*. In other words, when this thought comes, it breaks up the *samadhi*. This thought is what the shastra calls "intentional thinking." This is very powerful. Among the five omnipresent activities, this is called intentionality. It draws out your thoughts and sets them moving.

Why can thoughts come? Several basic causes are included here. The shastra says you can leave *samadhi* "on the basis of following your actions." You must pay close attention to this point. True cultivation of practice emphasizes the gate of conduct, that is, your mental activities, and the way you ordinarily treat people and handle things and talk—all kinds of conduct. Because the causal bases you plant are not the same, you are not always certain of being able to

attain the fruit of *samadhi*. If the causal basis planted is different, you will not be able to attain *samadhi* at all. Sometimes our bodies and minds have afflictions, and so we cannot concentrate and enter *samadhi*. If we do not eliminate the force of karma, we cannot attain *samadhi*. This is what is meant by leaving *samadhi* "on the basis of following your actions."

The shastra says you can leave *samadhi* "on the basis of determining your actions." This means that the method and aim of your *samadhi* is not right. For example, if you have a cold today, and when you have just begun to sit down to meditate, you are thinking of getting rid of the cold, this motivating idea is the basis for your *samadhi*. Even though there is such a slight deviation in the causal basis, the difference in results will be great.

The shastra says you can leave *samadhi* "on the basis of planning your actions." Planning means expectations. For example, when some people sit in meditation, they are subconsciously hoping that if they sit in meditation, their bodies will thereby become healthy. Other people hope to gain the power of supernormal vision through meditation. There are also some people who deliberately cross their legs and assume the sitting posture imagining that they will get comfortable. Therefore, if the causal basis for cultivating *samadhi* differs from a sincere selfless aspiration for enlightenment, the results will not be the same. The shastra says that for all these reasons "you leave *samadhi*." Anyone of these causal factors can make you leave *samadhi*.

The example raised by the Bodhisattva Maitreya of actions that can make you leave *samadhi* is "all activities you do, such as repairing and taking care of your robe and bowl." Some people are in *samadhi*, doing fine, when all of a sudden a thought comes: "My robe is torn. When I finish sitting I will go mend it." Or they have forgotten something, and suddenly think of it. Then they regret this mistake, and sit there with their thoughts in confusion. This is a sign of leaving *samadhi*, something that breaks up this realm. This line by the Bodhisattva Maitreya, "all activities you do, such as repairing and taking care of your robe and bowl" includes everything. What follows, "all activities you do such as eating and drinking and seeking convenience and gain, and serving teachers and elders"—these, too, are all factors that can make you unable to attain *samadhi*, or make you leave *samadhi*.

"When you set a time in advance" refers to things like this: Some people do not need an alarm clock to wake up. If something is happening tomorrow, they can get up by themselves at a certain time. This is the functioning of the karmic power of thought.

The shastra continues: "What is practice? It means to do all kinds of practices in accordance with causal conditions and thereby enter *samadhi*." Causal conditions are all sorts of things like reciting the buddha-name, the Taoist practice of guarding the apertures, and the Esoteric Buddhist practice of visualization. From the Yogacara viewpoint, causal conditions are intentional acts, they are special creations in the consciousness. The methods that each individual takes as causal conditions are not the same, but they can still enter *samadhi*.

The shastra speaks of "coarse practice." For example, when we feel a burden in the world is too heavy, and we cannot bear this burden, we very much want to get away from it. As for "quiet practice," especially in this industrial commercial age, we live lives that are busy from morning to night. We would very much like a little peace and quiet, to take a rest. "The practice of sickness" refers to such things as birth, aging, sickness, and death. "The malignant tumor practice" refers to viewing everything in the world as filthy, like a malignant tumor. "The arrow practice" is to be as unfeeling as a poison arrow. "The impermanence practice" is to feel the impermanence of everything. These concepts impel us to make efforts to cultivate the Path.

The shastra continues: "What are the forms of all these practices in the various *samadhis*? This means that when you are about to enter any *samadhi*, the form of this *samadhi* first arises. By means of this form, you understand for yourself that you will soon enter into the *samadhi* with such and such characteristics, and enter it correctly."

You cultivate *samadhi* by means of all the previously mentioned psychological concepts. The shastra says "the various *samadhis*" because there are all sorts of different realms of *samadhi*. You must clearly recognize the contours of all of these *samadhis*.

These are the so-called principles of the teaching. The teaching as a whole is not the same as one of its schools. A school adopts a particular method, and enters deeply into that one gate. When you have gone into it, then they tell you more. The teaching as a whole is like the Confucian progression from the Small Learning to the Intermediate Learning to the Great Learning. It is like studying

science. First you learn the theoretical principles clearly, and then you go to the laboratory to conduct experiments.

The teaching as a whole tells us that first we must comprehend in theoretical terms "what the forms of all these practrices in the various *samadhis* are." What does it mean to manifest forms? Once you are clear about the theory, then you put it aside, and you can be clear in your cultivation of practice and your meditation work, and know when your own current situation will enable you to enter *samadhi*.

Sometimes you might feel that the situation of your body and mind today is not in accord with reciting the buddha-name, and you will know how to make a timely adjustment: perhaps you will do visualizations, or do something else. Thus, to study Buddhism you must study its eighty-four thousand methods. Sometimes you will feel that your body and mind are not right, and use the mindfulness of breath from among the ten forms of mindfulness, and then they will be put right. I have always taught all of you many methods. You must know how to use them in a timely manner. When you have mastered your theoretical studies, you will know for yourself when you can enter a certain kind of *samadhi*, and when you can use the methods you know. As the shastra says, "you will know for yourself." A person who has mastered the theory will know as soon as he sits cross-legged, or even without sitting cross-legged, when he is just standing there, what sort of *samadhi* he can enter at that time.

Therefore, it is by no means correct only to do meditation work. If you only do meditation work without mastering the theory behind it, you will always be cultivating blindly, and you will not even know what kind of *samadhi* you have reached. What kind of result do you call that? Some people only study Buddhist theory, and this is not right either. If you don't coordinate theoretical learning with practice, this becomes useless intellectual learning. How many people choose only one side of the matter today!

The shastra continues: "By these forms, people's teachers will also know that they will soon enter the *samadhi* with such-and-such forms."

If you have the guidance of an enlightened teacher, sometimes he has only to take one look at your condition, and he will immediately know if you can enter a certain realm of *samadhi*. Then he will teach you to cultivate a method by means of which you can immediately enter that *samadhi*. Therefore, when teachers receive people, besides having the spiritual power to know the minds of others, and recognize the basic capacities of other people, they must also observe the condition of each person's mind and body, and teach the most suitable method.

In these passages, the Bodhisattva Maitreya has told us how to enter *samadhi*, abide in *samadhi*, and leave *samadhi*.

The shastra asks: "What are forms?" What is meant here by the word "forms"? Using modern concepts, they would be called phenomenal appearances, conditions, or states of affairs. They can also be called experiential realms.

The shastra continues: "This refers to two kinds of forms. First, the forms you link up with. Second, the forms of basic causal conditions." Reciting the buddha-name, cessation and contemplation, visualization, cultivating the breath, cultivating the energy channels, and so on, are examples of forms you link up with. As an example of the second category, forms of basic causal conditions: Zen master Hsueh-tou Ch'in had made such efforts, but he still had not been able to awaken. One time he happened to see a pine tree, and as soon as he saw it in front of him, he awakened. This is a form of basic causal conditions.

The shastra continues: "'The forms you link up with' means differentiated entities. By linking up with these, you can enter the various *samadhis*." When you begin to cultivate the Dharma, you use the differentiating mind. You are always using your conceptual consciousness: if you did not use it, how could you cultivate anything? You might say: I don't want any thoughts, I am cultivating having no thoughts. But that is still the conceptual consciousness engaging in cultivating having no thoughts! That's why Lu Ch'un-yang said: "To subdue the mind, act without acting." By means of contrived action, you realize the uncontrived, absolute reality. This is the principle.

The shastra says: "Forms of basic causal conditions mean the provisions for *samadhi*. By means of these basic causal conditions, you can enter the various *samadhis*." To cultivate *samadhi* and do meditation work, you need resources. In Buddhism these are called provisions. To study Buddhism you need to be equipped with two kinds of provisions: the provisions of wisdom, and the provisions of merit. Provisions are especially important in Esoteric Buddhism. Such things as the fifty-five stations of bodhisattvas, the ten forms of faith, the ten forms of abiding, and the ten forms of dedicating merit, all belong in the category of provisions. If you do not have the resources, the provisions, what will you use to cultivate the Dharma?

If you do not have wisdom, if you have not comprehended the principles of the teaching, then your provisions are not sufficient. The provisions of merit are merit and the blessings that are its rewards. If your merit is not sufficient, as soon as you are able to sit down and meditate, the telephone rings, and someone in the family has gotten sick, and you do not even have enough merit to have time free to meditate. As soon as you want to get on the right track, and you've cleared some time to work on your meditation, emergencies spring up on every side, no matter how many times you try. If you are not doing meditation work, nothing happens at all, but as soon as you start to meditate, everything happens. Cultivating practice requires great merit and blessings.

Worldly success and fame and wealth and status are very hard to acquire. But there are other blessings that are even harder to find, the pure blessings. Unless you have cultivated practice very well for many lifetimes through the ages, you will not be able to attain these. One day I was able to enjoy a second of pure blessing, and in my mind I felt limitless reverence, and also limitless fear, because this was due to the protection of all the buddhas and bodhisattvas.

To cultivate *samadhi*, you must first seek the provisions for it. In the audience there are several people who have studied Buddhism and cultivated the Path for a good many years. In Buddhist theory, they are all first class. In terms of meditative accomplishment, they have a bit. But what about the provision of merit and blessings? They do not have any at all: they do not have the time to meditate. Think it over for yourselves: are your merits and blessings sufficient or not? The shastra says:

> Follow a true teacher of the teaching of *samadhi*, accumulate the provisions for the practices of the various *samadhis*, cultivate the mental states associated with desire and aversion and affliction, and investigate them accurately and understand them fully when you are in confusion and when you are not.

The Bodhisattva Maitreya talks of the provisions for *samadhi*, merit and wisdom. The first step in studying Buddhism is to perfect these. If you are not fully equipped with these, don't even think of succeeding in cultivating the Path. You won't even have the prerequisites to sit in meditation. Why do I say you will not have the prerequisites? First of all, if you want to cultivate pure clarity amidst confusion and non-confusion, you may be very clear yourself, but if your merit and blessings are not sufficient, even though you are not disturbing anyone else, other people may come and disturb your cultivation of practice.

The shastra continues to say that if you have the right provisions of merit and wisdom, "You will not be harried or afflicted by others." If your merit is not sufficient, others will come and afflict you. The shastra says that this affliction "may be done by other people, or it may be done by non-human creatures, or it may be done by sounds, or it may be done by actions." In reality it doesn't matter whether it is the demons of delusion outside or the demons of delusion within: they are all the creations of mind-only. If you seek meditative accomplishments too zealously, you will make demonic realms of delusion: these are created by your meditation work. In other words, there are no demons: it is all the creation of the demons of your own mind. The shastra says:

> What is good adjustment [of *samadhi*]? It means that if *samadhi* is clung to by contrived activity, it is like water being grasped. If it is held onto by the nature of Dharma, it is not still and not wondrous. This is not the secure Path, and you will not realize the unified nature of mind. Such states of *samadhi* are said not to be in good adjustment.

You must pay close attention to this passage. What does "good" mean? It is what the Confucian sage Tseng-tzu said in *The Great Learning*: "The path of great learning lies in illuminating bright virtue, in being on close terms with the people, and in stopping at perfect goodness." This is the best explanatory note to the concept of "perfect goodness."

If you are in the realm of *samadhi*, and in your mind there are still "the clingings of contrived action," for example, if in your mind there is still the thought of cultivating the Path, this thought has already tied up your mind, and your mental state is already stained with a certain experiential realm. You are already clinging to something, and you have been tied up by this thought. It is like "water being grasped." If water is poured into a teacup, the limits of its realm are only as big as the teacup. If we take that cup of water and pour it into the ocean, see how big the realm of the water is then!

What does the shastra mean by "held onto by the nature of the Dharma"? When you have read a lot of Zen books and Esoteric

Buddhist books, and other Buddhist books, you hold on tight to those theories, and you are filled up with Buddhist theories. Your mouth is always spouting Buddhist talk and your whole body reeks of Buddhism: you are besotted with Buddhism. This is what the Bodhisattva Maitreya meant in this phrase, "held onto by the nature of the Dharma." The result is that you will not be able to concentrate your mind or to become still, and fundamentally you will not be able to reach the inherent oneness of mind. This is not in the category of good adjustment: you cannot properly adjust your mental state. You must investigate all such things for yourself.

Since there is so much material here, why do I just explain a little here and a little there? The goal is not to let you get into a dependent attitude. All I can do is pick out the important points and talk about them. You must go read the rest for yourselves, and continue to study them on your own. Only this will work.

The shastra says: "Then, as the scriptures which analyze *samadhi* say, a person who has *samadhi* can be in a flourishing state and yet think he is in decline. They explain at length that in these four phases one must recognize two kinds of delusions." "These four phases" are the realms from the first *dhyana* to the fourth *dhyana*. There are two kinds of delusions that can develop here.

Buddha has also given this analogy. Someone asked Buddha: Why is it that in the first phase of study, there are obvious results, while later on, it gets harder and harder? Buddha said: Haven't you seen a person digging a well? When he starts digging, it is very easy to see the results of his efforts. When he digs out some earth and carries it away, results appear very quickly. But when he has dug down a hundred feet, he can't even dig out a single basket load in two or three days, and results appear to be very slow. In fact, the results are the same, it's just that the well is deeper and each basket load does not make an obvious difference. Many people who do meditation work also get this feeling. After they have continued doing it for awhile, they feel that they are not making progress anymore. All you can say in this case is that you do not have wisdom, you are not observing clearly, and you have not yet investigated the principles of the teaching and understood them clearly. In reality, you are progressing. You have progressed to the point that you are in another state, but you yourself cannot see it. Therefore, you must have wisdom in every phase of studying Buddhism and cultivating the Path.

What does it mean to study Buddhism and cultivate the Path? It means to investigate yourself all through your life, to check up on

yourself. It's just this simple. A hero can conquer the world, but he cannot conquer himself. A sage just has to conquer himself, he doesn't want to go conquer the world. Conquering the world is easy. Conquering oneself is hard. Thus it is said that it is hard to learn to be a sage. Sages are people who all through their lives check up on themselves, reflect on themselves, study themselves. If a person is studying to be a sage, but spends all day long investigating others and observing others, then he has been expelled from school and he is a "surplus person." To cultivate practice, you must investigate yourself here and now.

While moving from the first *dhyana* to the second *dhyana*, though you are indeed progressing, in the course of making progress, there seems to be a kind of regressive phenomenon. This is like the moment before the dawn when it gets even darker. In the same way, when you are getting more and more pure and illuminated, there can be an interval when a subtle darkening and muddling occurs. In fact, this positively will occur. After you have passed through this phase of being muddled, the purity and clarity will emerge. In theoretical terms, the purity and clarity is it, and the darkening and muddling is also it. Because you do not clearly understand the principle, you just hold to the pure clarity, and not the dark muddling, and you think you have regressed, and are falling into the barriers of delusion. If you think you have fallen into the barriers of delusion, then delusion will come.

What I want to talk about now is regressing from within the state of *samadhi*. Ordinarily when people talk about meditation work and regression, there is really no regression at all. Especially if we go by the explanation of Chinese culture, if we study the *I Ching* we will understand this principle, and feel that regression is no more than an alternating transformation. Nothing in the world does not change: everything must change. People and events, the myriad things in the universe, material and psychological phenomena: everything is in the process of transformation at all times and in all places. If anything were not changing, then it would not be a phenomenon in the universe. So there is no realm that can remain forever without changing. People in general do not clearly understand this principle. They want to hold tight to experiential realms and not let them change. This is called stupidity.

In China's *I Ching* this is called "change." In Buddhism it is called "impermanence." The meaning is the same. Impermanence is the term used from the point of view of the final result. No situation

in the world has a permanent existence, so they are called impermanent. The *I Ching* does not follow this route. Instead, it calls this "change." Change does not refer to phenomena themselves, it is a basic principle. The basic principle of everything in the world is that it is impossible not to change. Having understood this principle, first class people guide change, and know what the next step of the process of change will be. Since everything in the world has this inner pattern of necessary change, when you do meditation work and cultivate practice, you must recognize this clearly. In other words, people who do meditation work and cultivate practice know that any particular experiential realm will inevitably change. A person with the brilliance of transcendental wisdom is able to know in advance how the next step of the process of change will proceed.

Our general summary of the essentials of *The Yogacarabhumi Shastra* will stop at this point. Now let us talk about *The Abhisamayalamkara Shastra.*

The Abhisamayalamkara Shastra is also within the philosophical system of the Bodhisattva Maitreya. It is one of the Bodhisattva Maitreya's five great treatises. People who are studying Yogacara consciousness-only philosophy, and especially people who are studying Esoteric Buddhism and Zen, must study this thoroughly. During the early period of Buddhism in China, this classic text was not translated into Chinese. When Dharma master Hsuan-tsang was in India collecting scriptures in the early seventh century, he brought a Sanskrit text of this treatise back with him to China. But he had not had time to translate it by the time of his death. The Sanskrit text was lost, and this text was only extant in Tibet. It was translated into Chinese in the early years of the Chinese Republic by Dharma master Fa-tsun.

In terms of doing meditation work, "abhisamaya" in the title of the shastra refers to the method of cessation and contemplation involving the realm of immediate awareness. "Immediate awareness" is a term from Yogacara philosophy. Yogacara distinguishes immediate awareness, comparative awareness, and erroneous awareness. "Immediate" means it is made manifest. "Awareness" refers to the experiential realm, the situation that appears. The word used here for "awareness" [the Chinese word *liang*, which means judgment, assessment] is really a brilliant translation. Our whole world, the mountains and rivers and the earth, are all the immediate awareness of the *alaya* consciousness. This immediate awareness manifests itself without adding the function of discriminating intellect: it directly manifests this immediate awareness.

To give an example, the immediate awareness of our conceptual consciousness is the realm of no thought that the Sixth Patriarch of the Zen School always talked about. This is also the most important initial manifestation of the immediate awareness of the sixth consciousness. Therefore, when you empty out past, present, and future, this is the mindfulness of the immediate awareness of the conceptual consciousness clearly understanding the pure illumination of the conceptual consciousness, without miscellaneous thoughts, and without false thought.

For example, when we wake up early in the morning, before we have opened our eyes, there are no thoughts in our minds. Since there is no feeling of anger or joy, the moment when we have just awakened is the immediate awareness of the conceptual consciousness. Then we start: "I'm awake" "What time is it?" "I have to get to work" and so on and so forth. The discriminating function of conceptual consciousness starts: this is called comparative awareness. All false thoughts, considerations, and discriminations are all comparative awareness. Erroneous awareness means realms of deluded thoughts, experiential realms of conditions of mental illness.

Besides these three, there is also the awareness of the sagely teachings. This is what everyone has in their heads when they study Buddhism and cultivate the Path. For example: "How can I reach *samadhi*?" "How can I become enlightened?" "How can I illuminate mind and see true nature?" "How can I develop *prajna*?" Thoughts like these are all examples of the awareness of the sagely teachings. You have these thoughts because the sages have taught you, and you have accepted their teachings. Thus, when you understand Buddhism and can explain its theories well, this is only the awareness of the sagely teachings. These truths are Buddha's, not yours: you are not Buddha.

So what about immediate awareness? There's a Zen saying: "The prior thought is not born, the next thought does not arise, the current thought is itself empty." this is immediate awareness. Immediate awareness is *prajna*, transcendental wisdom. Immediate awareness is pure and clear. But this immediate awareness only observes the aspect of emptiness. For the wondrous being that arises from true emptiness, we must have another discussion. The principle of true emptiness, wondrous being is fully included in *The Abhisamayalamkara Shastra's* methods of cultivation, but it very much emphasizes the four intensified practices.

9

THE FOUR INTENSIFIED PRACTICES

A student asked a question related to the matter of eating meat. Whenever there is sincere faith, and earnest effort, as soon as you get on the right track at all, this phenomenon spontaneously occurs: as soon as you taste meat, or smell it, or even see it, you cannot stand it. According to the principles of Buddhism, these are the roots of goodness starting to operate, and the achievement of merit. After a long time, if you slack off in your cultivation of practice, then you will want to eat meat again. This is connected with your mind not being steadfast and not making effort.

On I-lan Mountain there is a poem on the subject of the spirit immortals which relates to this issue:

> Thirty-three heavens, heaven upon heaven
> In the white clouds there is a spirit immortal
> The spirit immortal was originally an ordinary person
> The only fear is that the ordinary person will not
> have a steadfast mind.

Whether or not you succeed in cultivating the path of the immortals (enlightenment) depends only on whether or not your mind is steadfast and firm. This is the basic issue.

Someone else asked this question: "As soon as I close my eyes, many illusory scenes appear before me, and for a long time I have not been able to get beyond this realm. How can I resolve this problem?"

When the energy channels open through the "jade pillow barrier" in the hindbrain, some people, due to poor nutrition, develop all sorts of problems. Some people's eyes get red. Some people develop a condition similar to cataracts. The only thing to do is to have faith: after the energy channels have opened all the way, then you will recover and your eyes will be better than before. When the energy channels reach the "jade pillow barrier," and are about to penetrate through it but have not yet done so, many phenomena develop. It is

normal then to see illusory scenes. Some people can even see through walls, and develop supernatural vision. In this situation, spiritual powers and mental illness are twin brothers. When all sorts of illusory scenes come to us, it's not that we cannot get rid of them, it's that we continue playing with them without even being aware of it ourselves. If you have this idea that you very much want to get rid of them, aren't you being turned around by them? You are clinging to them, aren't you? The only thing to do is not to pay attention to them, and gradually forget all about your head, and then you will get better.

After this you will enter into another new realm. You will not see illusory forms anymore, but instead you will see a light inside your body. After a long time, you will also see your heart and your blood circulation clearly, without using X-rays. But you shouldn't consider this to be supernatural vision. If you consider it as supernatural vision, then you will get attached to delusion; if you don't take it as supernatural vision, then you will have almost passed through it.

Therefore, in answer to the question, you should not try to think of a way to get rid of these illusory scenes appearing before you when you close your eyes. If you are not clear about the principles involved, then you will cling to this realm and the illusory scenes will increase more and more. The main reason for this is that the functioning of your eyes has weakened or become fatigued. If you take some medicines that strengthen the eyes, you will get better.

Now let us continue with what we were discussing last time which is that there is a close connection between *The Abhisamayalamkara Shastra* and *The Yogacarabhumi Shastra*, especially in the way they put particular emphasis on cultivating practice and on the four intensified practices. The extensive and brief treatises on the stages of the path of enlightenment by the great teacher Tsongkhapa of the Gelugpa Sect of Tibetan Esoteric Buddhism are both based on methods of cultivating practice derived from the system in these two Yogacara shastras. Thus the cultivation of the Gelugpa Sect of Esoteric Buddhism, and the various other sects of Esoteric Buddhism, are all based on these, both in respect to basic theory and in cultivating realization. In fact, these treatises are both precious texts for cultivating realization in all the schools of both exoteric and esoteric Buddhism. It is necessary to master both of them.

The Abhisamayalamkara Shastra, volume 1, chapter two on "The Knowledge of All Forms," explains the methods of the four intensified practices: "Among the paths of the four intensified practices, because this is the preliminary sign of the fire of the wisdom of seeing the Path, it is called 'warming.'"

In the cultivation methods of the four intensified practices, first you must seek to see the Path. This is what the Zen School calls seeing truth, really seeing inherent emptiness. But this seeing is not the same as the eye seeing. This is the seeing which *The Surangama Sutra* describes as follows: "When you see seeing, this seeing [that sees seeing] is not [ordinary] seeing. This seeing [that sees seeing] is detached from [ordinary] seeing, and [ordinary] seeing cannot reach it." *The Surangama Sutra* is telling us that when we see the Path, this seeing is not the seeing of the eyes seeing, the [dualistic] seeing of seeing subject and object seen. It is detached from both subject and object. It is not our eyes seeing the Path as we imagine now, or a situation we can explain theoretically.

The shastra speaks of "the preliminary sign of the fire of the wisdom of seeing the Path." That is, just before we see the Path, in the instant when we are about to see the Path, warmth is generated. This is a learned explanation in terms of the principles of the teaching. In other words, when you really see the Path, as the great worthies of the Zen School have related, in an instant there is a burst of enlightenment! Your whole body is covered with sweat: this is the arrival of the first stage of the four intensified practices, the characteristic of warming.

The shastra says: "Because the roots of goodness are not disturbed by misguided views [the second of the four intensified practices] is called 'the peak.'"

At this point you take another step forward, and match seeing the Path with your practice. Zen master Pai-chang had a saying: a person who has seen the Path "is not different from the person he was before; he only differs from his past conduct." On the surface, people who have awakened to the Path are still the people they were all along. But in their thinking and psychological activities, in their moral standards in being a person and handling situations, they are entirely different than they were before. They have changed so that they no longer have to deliberately seek the good, but instead spontaneously accord with the good. To do good by seeking the good is painful, it is disciplining one's conduct, it is a difficult practice of forcing oneself to do something hard. Thus, someone who has the merit of holding to discipline deserves to be praised! People who have seen the Path do

not talk of holding to discipline. They are spontaneously within disciplined conduct in all things. "Their roots of goodness are not disturbed by misguided views." This is the characteristic of the peak.

The shastra says: "Because it eradicates all the bad tendencies engendered by the confusions of evil karma, and is far removed from fear of the nature of true emptiness, [the third of the four intensified practices] is called 'forbearance.'"

It spontaneously annihilates all the bad tendencies engendered in response to evil karma. Strictly speaking, there is a big issue in this statement. In other words, there can be bad tendencies appearing in this lifetime because of what has been created and brought about by evil karma in the past. These "tendencies" are tendencies toward the six planes of cyclical existence. If you examine the matter in detail you can discover that in many people the signs of which plane of existence they will go to are already revealed in their present lives, when they become weak and sick and are about to die. There are also people whose evil tendencies are revealed in their dreams. There are many variations of this, and they have all been discussed in the Buddhist scriptures.

A person who sees the Path and reaches the stages of warming and the peak still has insufficient *samadhi* power. Because his *samadhi* power is not sufficient, sometimes when he is in *samadhi* evil tendencies appear, and may produce fear. For example, normally you are not afraid when realms of great delusion appear, but at that time when you are in *samadhi*, you will become afraid. Forbearance means that the power of *samadhi* is very strong and firm. It has the meaning of steadfast patience and decisiveness.

The passage talks about fear of the nature of true emptiness. When we study the Path, we want to see emptiness, so why are we afraid when we do? Many people are this way. Therefore *The Diamond Sutra* teaches you that you must have enough merit; if you do not, then when you see your own empty nature, you will be frightened.

Everyday all of you want to cultivate the Path. The first thing to do if you cultivate the Path is hold firm to loneliness. The highest form of cultivation in human life is to be able to hold firm to loneliness, and be able to appreciate solitude. When a person really cultivating the Path is faced with a realm of solitude, they can feel very comfortable. If you cannot bear loneliness, if you cannot hold firm in solitude, then you cannot accomplish anything. This is especially true since cultivating the path is basically cultivating quiet extinction.

When quiet extinction arrives, if you cannot hold firmly to it, isn't this fleeing from the Path? Here forbearance is not needed. If you move far beyond the fear of emptiness, this is true forbearance.

The shastra says: "Since it is the near cause for seeing the Path, and it is supreme among all worldly phenomena [the fourth intensified practice] is called 'the supreme worldly dharma'."

Only this is truly seeing the Path. The Bodhisattva Maitreya tells us this in literary language, from a learned point of view. In terms of phenomenal characteristics, warming is really getting warm. Moreover, warmth, life, and consciousness are essentially one. Therefore, enlightenment means that you transform consciousness into wisdom. If you really transform the conceptual consciousness, when you transform it into the subtle observing wisdom, there will always be heat generated. The esoteric school's practices of cultivating the breath, cultivating the energy channels, cultivating the bright spots, and cultivating the *kundalini*, are no more than the first step of warming. There is nothing special about them.

But if you cannot transform thoughts, false thinking, and the conceptual consciousness, then you will not be able to generate the characteristic of warming. Once you attain warming, then you have attained the real fire of *samadhi*. At this point you will definitely be able to accomplish the Taoist goal of eliminating sickness and prolonging life. This is because warmth, life, and consciousness are linked. It is also like this in the material world. Here in the realm of desire, in this material world of ours, anything that dies is sure to get cold, and anything that is alive is sure to be warm. The so-called intensified practices of warming, the peak, and forbearance are not mere theoretical principles, they are facts.

The shastra says: "Here let us further discuss, among the teachers of the Three Jewels, the jewel of the Sangha. This means, as discussed in the second chapter, the Great Vehicle's sixteen instants of seeing the Path included in the knowledge of the characteristics of the Path."

The second chapter of the shastra introduced the knowledge of the characteristics of the Path. What does it mean, to see the Path? The Bodhisattva Maitreya tells us all about it. However, among the characteristics of the Path involved in seeing the Path, there are sixteen instantaneous situational transformations. At this point, "bodhisattvas in the station of sagehood who peacefully dwell in the eight forbearances" enter the bodhisattva realm. "Bodhisattvas in the station of

sagehood" are also called *srota-apanna*, "stream-enterers." This is equivalent to the Hinayana station of the fruit of arhatship. They possess the later aids of the bodhisattvas. There are two kinds: the practice according to faith of those of dull faculties, and the practice according to the Dharma of those of sharp faculties.

People of dull faculties only have faith; by means of faith, they slowly develop their meditation work and perception of the truth. People of sharp faculties enter the Path on the basis of faith, and having experienced it, immediately begin to function as bodhisattvas. These two kinds are not the same. Accordingly the shastra says that there are also two kinds of people in regard to the methods of the four intensified practices, and they differ in their realms of cultivating practice, the process they experience, and their accomplishments.

The shastra says: "For those of dull faculties, it is called understanding by believing. For those of sharp faculties, it is called arriving by seeing. People of dull faculties believe at the theoretical level, but have not developed their perception of truth. People of sharp faculties arrive at truth, and their meditation accomplishments and carrying out of vows follows from this.

The Abhisamayalamkara Shastra, volume 2, chapter three on "Knowledge of the Characteristics of the Path," says:

> Understand completely that in the basis of the knowledge of the characteristics of the path of the holy *shravakas*, there are four selections that go along with it. This means that, since form is equal to supreme emptiness, the way of intensified practice included in the wisdom of comprehending that emptiness and form are equal and no different: this is the station of warming.

This is the path of the four intensified practices: meditation work and phenomena are all included within it. What is being discussed in this passage is the path of four intensified practices of the *shravakas*. Hinayana and Mahayana, the arhats and the bodhisattvas, each has its own version of the four intensified practices. Even the outside paths in their cultivation of practice and their meditation work have the four intensified practices, though they differ in depth of achievement from the Buddhist Path.

Now let us discuss the characteristics of the path of the four intensified practices of the *shravakas*. That is to say, with people who have

realized the fruit of sagehood via the vehicle of the *shravakas*, there are four conditions by which we can test their knowledge of the characteristics of the Path, that is, their realm of wisdom after seeing the Path.

First of all, people who have awakened to the Path, certainly experience that "form itself is emptiness." This is not merely theory. They must arrive at the realm where "form is equal to supreme emptiness." This is the supreme emptiness of form, not the phenomenal appearance of form. This is the realm of the vehicle of the *shravakas*.

If we are talking of seeing mountains and rivers and the whole earth as empty, and transforming all forms at will, this is the realm of the bodhisattvas. If you have studied Yogacara, you will know that in the bodhisattva realm the first five consciousnesses have also been transformed, and there is perfection of the fruit of enlightenment at the level of the first five consciousnesses and the eighth consciousness. If you have really transformed the first five consciousnesses, you can make yourself young if you want to, and can make your body better if it is not well. If you cannot transform the first five consciousnesses at all, then what have you seen?

What the shastra is telling us about here is "supreme emptiness," a metaphysical, penetrating realization that "form itself is emptiness." When you slowly make progress in wisdom, you realize that "emptiness itself is form." Only when you have comprehended that there is no difference between form and emptiness does it count as reaching the station of warming of the *shravakas*.

The shastra says: "The path of intensified practice included in the wisdom of comprehending that form equals supreme non-attainment is called the station of the peak." When you take another step forward you understand that in the phenomena of form, that is, in the four great elements of the material world, there is nothing attained. Ultimately there is utterly nothing attained, they are fundamentally empty. This is "form is not different from emptiness." When you have accomplished the wisdom attained by this, and the experiential realm which it contains, this is the station of the peak in the vehicle of the *shravakas*. When you reach the station of the peak, it is certain that the three channels and the seven chakras will open. When you have completely opened them, at the peak you can reach union with the universe.

The shastra says: "The path of intensified practice that is included in the wisdom that comprehends that form is equal to the supreme

mean and breaks up abiding in principles of permanence and impermanence, etc., is the station of forbearance."

When you take a step further in seeing truth, you comprehend form and the four great elements at the level of supreme truth, and you have already eliminated those realms. What realms? Abiding (that is, continuing, maintaining and upholding) and such things as the principle that all compounded things are permanent or impermanent.

Buddhism encourages people to comprehend that all compounded things are impermanent, that everything is empty. In Mahayana Buddhism, Buddha expounds *The Nirvana Sutra*, and he does not speak of impermanence, or of emptiness. Instead he speaks of permanence, bliss, selfhood, and purity: it is precisely the opposite of his original teaching. When Buddha was about to die, he told us that his original teaching of impermanence, suffering, emptiness, and no-self was expedient means, and the real truth is permanent, blissful, personal, and pure. No matter whether it is impermanence, suffering, emptiness, and no-self, or permanence, bliss, selfhood, and purity, both of these are extreme statements. The supreme truth of the Middle Path is not attached to either extreme. Emptiness and existence are extreme statements, relative to each other. Cultivating and not cultivating, sitting in meditation and not sitting in meditation are all extremes, so we should not be attached to any of them.

This is very serious. The phenomena of form, and the material world, are all impermanent. But the cycle of creation, abiding, destruction, and emptiness keeps on repeating itself over and over again, so obviously it is not impermanent. But this is definitely not the materialist thinkers' concept of permanence. You must comprehend this. Only then will you achieve the stage of forbearance at the level of the *shravakas*.

We can see that experiential realms attainable by different individuals are not the same, and so according to what is appropriate to the individual case it is all right to cultivate Esoteric Buddhism, or T'ien-t'ai Buddhism, or the Zen School, or Pure Land Buddhism, or Taoism. But if you do not penetrate their principles, then all your meditation work will be in vain. You will tie yourself up for many years without even knowing it. If you cannot break through a particular experiential realm, then you will have no way of becoming more refined.

For example, modern day people love to talk about *ch'i* channels. But after your cultivation of the *ch'i* channels has really reached

the point that your body and mind are filled inside and out with light, how do you take the next step? If you say you don't know, then you will be slowly revolving through thousands of births over tens of thousands of eons. I always ask, "You say you are making your *ch'i* circulate by 'turning the water wheel.' Ultimately how many times will you turn it?" This is not a joke, but not a single person has been able to answer. Therefore, unless you have penetrated the principles of the teaching, you will not know how you must take the next step. In fact Buddha has explained it all in the canon, in the exoteric teachings. But because the Buddhist scriptures are hard to read, with some issues addressed in one text, and some in another text, if you read them without paying careful attention, then you will overlook key points.

The shastra says: "Relying on the ten stages of bodhisattvas means fully comprehending that the stage of Joy is equal to supreme nonabiding. As the scriptures explain at length, the path of intensified practice contained in this wisdom is 'the supreme worldly dharma.'"

When you advance further you arrive at the first stage of bodhisattvas, the stage of Joy. This is supreme nonabiding, the realm of the metaphysical Path. This realm is included in *prajna* wisdom, so it is called "the supreme worldly dharma." But it is no more than the first stage of the bodhisattvas.

The shastra continues: "The term 'self-enlightened' refers to independently awakened arhats. At the end they do not have to rely on the teachings of another teacher, and they can realize enlightenment by themselves. The word 'either' means that at that time they do not use words to expound the Dharma to others either."

Sometimes, when you cannot find an enlightened teacher who has genuinely realized the Path and cultivated practice, you can find the path of self-enlightenment. Buddha tells us that we must take refuge within the Three Jewels: the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha are all still present. The whole great Buddhist canon is still present. Just search in the Buddhist canon, and it is the same as if Buddha himself were here in person. If you try hard like this, you too can find the fruit of self-awakening. So when we say "self-awakened," this means the solitary enlightened ones, the *shravakas*, and the *pratyekas* who awaken from contemplating interdependent causation. At the end, at the moment of sudden enlightenment, the independently awakened arhats of the path of the middle vehicle do not necessarily have to rely on an enlightened teacher. They can realize enlightenment on their own. Such people are called

independently enlightened buddhas, *pratyeka* buddhas. This passage in the shastra is very important.

Take note that in this shastra the path of the *shravakas*, which has just been discussed, is always discussed in terms of the two concepts of form and emptiness. Form means the four great elements: earth, water, fire, and wind. Our bodies and the material world belong in the category of form. Realizing enlightenment is seeing the empty true nature of form. After you have seen their empty true nature, then all phenomena are transformed. They are certainly transformed, so it is called sudden enlightenment. In other words, with enlightenment, the phenomena of form are suddenly transformed, this is for certain.

It's like the stages of cultivating practice called the four intensified practices, "warming, the peak, forbearance, and the supreme worldly dharma": when you reach a certain stage, the experiential realm associated with that stage is sure to manifest itself. This is not a religious regulation, but a necessary transformation that occurs when the body and mind follow the road of cultivating practice. When your meditation work reaches a certain stage, then certain phenomena appear. If those phenomena are not there, then it is not that experiential realm, and your meditation work has not reached that stage.

The shastra says: "You must realize that the unicorn path [the path of the *pratyekas*] is categorized by differences in three phenomena. This means that they are detached from external objects like form, the discriminations among the objects of grasping, but they have not yet been able to detach from inner consciousness, the grasping subject, and they are really clinging to discriminations. According to the differences in what they depend on, this is depending on the nature of phenomena [which is empty] according to the teaching included in the *pratyeka* vehicle, and taking this as the seed-nature which they rely on."

Here the shastra makes a special point of saying that some people who have cultivated practice for many years may have perhaps by chance encountered this realm once, like blind cats bumping into dead rats: they have encountered the realm of the unicorn path (the unicorn path is a metaphor for the *pratyeka* vehicle). There are three kinds of situations associated with the realm of the self-enlightenment and self-sanctioning of the *pratyeka* vehicle, the vehicle of independent enlightenment. They have managed to reach the stage where they are indifferent to everything in the world. They are not

enraptured with external objects, and their discriminating minds are comparatively attenuated. If they can manage to be like this, if they have this level of cultivation, why can't they maintain it forever? That is because "they have not yet been able to detach from inner consciousness, the grasping subject, and the distinctions of clinging to the real." That is to say, the reason for this is that in their inner minds, in the ground of the *alaya* consciousness, the roots of seed-nature have still not been extirpated, and are still there. As the proverb says: "If the wild fire has not completely burned out, when the spring wind blows it may blaze up again." Our false thoughts and habit-energy are just like this. You feel that you have no clingings or attachments, but in reality, you are unwittingly still clinging and attached, though even you do not know it yourself. If you can recognize this habit-energy, then you will be able to become liberated from it.

You must not misunderstand this term "discrimination," and think that you are always able to see discriminating thought. In fact, there are times when you cannot see your discriminating mind. For example, take what one of our fellow students asked about a little while ago: if you do meditation work for several days, you will not want to eat meat anymore. At that point, you may think that you will detach from the discriminating mind of eating meat and pungent spices, but it is not so! In a dream you may see a bowl of meat and think how good it smells.

In years gone by after a retreat on Mount O-mei, I had left the mountain and was traveling together with a monk friend. When we were almost to Ch'eng-tu, about two miles from the city, we were assailed by the smell of a crowd of people. At that time I came to believe what it says in the classic vernacular novel *Journey to the West*: it is very easy for demons to find human flesh to eat. As soon as they smell the odor of living humans anyplace, demons come. When we entered the city gate, my friend the monk smelled some Szechuan twice-cooked pork, and how good it smelled to him! At that point he forced me to leave right away. This is what the shastra meant by "really clinging to discriminations" within the *alaya* consciousness, without being aware of it ourselves. When you can search out this one, then you are almost there.

Thus, sometimes you feel that you have worked at your meditation very well for these several days, and your mind ground is very clean, but you do not realize that you are "really clinging to discriminations," and that they will hang you up as soon as the occasion

arises. In cultivating the Path and studying Buddhism, when you have made your mind very pure, there is one particular discriminating thought that you should be very afraid of: that is as soon as you see someone else say something wrong, or do something wrong, or break the rules, you immediately feel very annoyed. This is the mind of anger "really clinging to discriminations." Did you think "really clinging to discriminations" would be that easy to get rid of? If it were really that easy, you would already be enlightened.

Previously we discussed questions relating to achieving good health by cultivating practice, and entering the realm of *samadhi* by doing meditation work. In this connection I used *The Ekottara-agama-sutra*'s method of cultivating the breath as it moves in and out. The result was that we brought to light a very serious problem. There are many people who misunderstand the principles of this method, particularly women. When women practice tempering the breath, and they draw in their lower abdomens, their attention should not be on the lower abdomen. In any method of cultivation whatsoever, they should not focus their attention on the lower field of elixir [the lower abdomen]. Anyone who focuses the attention on the lower field of elixir will develop problems: it's the same for men, too. If you focus on the lower field of elixir, you can cause your belly to bloat, your intestines to thicken, and your stomach to drop. What kind of meditative accomplishment is this? The buddha-images cast after the T'ang and Sung all show pendulous bellies. This depiction is entirely wrong, and has harmed many people. In fact Buddha was not like this.

In tempering and refining the breath, this "breath" is not the breath that moves in and out through the nostrils. This method only makes use of this breath, and sets it in motion. It is like using a match: after the fire is lit, you do not need the match anymore. There is warmth in every person's body and life, and the body itself also has breath. We must take this and directly experience it: only then are we doing *anapana*. If you really experience the breath directly, then within seven days you are sure to realize the fruit of enlightenment. This is not a joke: the Buddha Dharma does not deceive people.

Everyone cultivates the breath and cultivates the channels without even being clear about what the breath [in the sense of energy, *ch'i*] is and what the channels are: they concentrate on the ordinary physical breath moving in and out. As I said before, breathing and sounds are all phenomena of birth and death. Is it logical to use the phenomena of birth and death to seek a result [enlightenment] that is

not born and does not die? Obviously this is wrong. As for refining the breath, the *ch'i*, it is fundamentally there within our bodies, and all we have to do is develop what is fundamentally there already. If you can really do this, then the inside of your body will surely undergo a transformation. What's so difficult about that?

For example, when you are tired, and you want to go to sleep, all you have to do is inhale, and stop breathing, and hold your breath. Within your body the original *ch'i* is fundamentally present, and that original *ch'i* will start to function. It's like when a battery is used up, and you plug it in to recharge it, and you can then use it again. The Buddha Dharma's principles of cultivating practice are the same as the principles of the material world. In fact, if you understand that principle, then you can experience the *ch'i* in your own body. In this way, using the *ch'i*, the vital energy of your own body, you can reach the point of eliminating sickness and prolonging life and rejuvenating yourself. This is very easy, as easy as turning your hand over. It is because you have not arrived at seeing truth, that you cannot recognize this clearly.

But recognizing *ch'i*, the vital energy, is also very difficult. When you have recognized *ch'i*, you must refine it to the point that "When vitality is complete, you do not think of sex. When energy is complete, you do not think of food. When spirit is complete, you do not think of sleep." Within three days at the most you can accomplish this, and sitting in meditation, you can enter as many heavens of *samadhi* as you want, and you can make your body as light and as spiritually aware as you want. That's why Buddha told his son Rahula that if he cultivated this method, he would succeed very quickly.

Why was it easy for Rahula to cultivate this method? Having entered the Path as a chaste lad, by cultivating this method within a few days he realized the fruit of enlightenment. Girls before their first menstruation, before their knowledge of sex has developed, and boys who know nothing of sex are called chaste youths. If you want to realize the fruit of enlightenment, no matter if you are male or female or old or young, no matter what your age, the first step in cultivating practice is to reach the level of a chaste youth. How can you reach the level of a chaste youth? When your mind has no discriminating thoughts, and your physical body and the phenomena of form are transformed, and your six sense faculties have no defilements, only then are you transformed into the body of a chaste youth. Then you will immediately enter the Path. This is absolutely not false: the Buddha Dharma does not deceive people.

The shastra says: Understand completely that in the basis of the knowledge of the characteristics of the path of the *pratyekas*, there are four selections that go along with it. This means that establishing that form is equal to the supreme mean, and establishing provisional existence within the wordless without going against the true nature of phenomena, is the station of "warming."

There is also a difference between the *pratyeka* path and the fruit of the *shravakas*. The path of the *pratyekas*, the independently enlightened ones, is the path of the middle vehicle in Buddhism. "Provisional existence within the wordless" is true emptiness creating the functioning of wondrous existence. Even if *pratyekas* cling to existence, they do not go against the empty true nature of phenomena. In other words, being empty and still being able to arouse the function of existence: only this is the station of warming in the path of the *pratyekas*.

The shastra says: "The station of 'the peak' [in the *pratyeka* path] comes from comprehending that form is equal to the supreme manifestation of the non-reduction [of the relative by the absolute]."

What is the station of the peak on the *pratyeka* path? It is understanding that the phenomena of form in the material world are not lessened in the supreme truth. To draw an analogy, suppose a cigarette is completely burned down. Using scientific methods, it would be possible to gather together this smoke and reassemble the cigarette, without any reduction in quantity. Thus, when we enter the realm of emptiness, and we make it function as wondrous being, there is likewise no reduction. A person who has succeeded in cultivating the Path does not have to undergo incarnation in the six planes of cyclical existence for another life. His own will-generated body, as soon as his will stirs, can create another body.

The phenomena of mind are extraordinary, and the phenomena of form are just as inconceivable. The Buddha Dharma places special emphasis on developing the aspect of the phenomena of mind. Only if you completely comprehend mind, can you comprehend form and comprehend the material world. Buddhism is not developed in respect to the material world but in reality, mind and material things both have one source, and material things are just as inconceivable as mind. Taoism went toward the aspect of the phenomena of form. The Taoist method is to break through them first, and only then will cultivation succeed. This is comprehending the body. In later generations Esoteric Buddhism also followed this road. Now science is in the process of investigating this, and it, too, is following this road.

We who study Buddhism must not slight modern science. We must make contact with it all the time, and we must read scientific study materials. Why are Americans always launching satellites and space shuttles? Because they are probing the secrets of the universe. Because they are investigating form. But there is one thing that is very regrettable. They only touch the most superficial aspect of life, they only search on the outside. When they have searched for a long while, even if they have found something, they still cannot see what has initiated the search. Therefore, people who study Buddhism and cultivate the Path turn around and search in themselves. When they find "this one," that one will be easy. This requires you to seek realization for yourself.

Thus, people who study Buddhism and cultivate the Path are very selfish. Why? Because they must observe themselves at all times, and must seek at all times to resolve their own questions. If there is anything that you have not resolved, and you think you are correct, then you are deceiving yourself. You must resolve everything about birth, old age, sickness and death. To study Buddhism, people must resolve these fundamental questions. What are people who study Buddhism? They are people who examine themselves throughout life, who reflect back on themselves. People who can do this at all times in all places are people who are cultivating practice. So-called self-enlightenment means searching out your own errors and resolving your own questions at all times. This is the principle.

What is the station of forbearance in the path of the *pratyekas*? The shastra says: "Forbearance comes because, comprehending the inner emptiness [*pratyekas*] completely comprehend that form is equal to supreme ungraspability." People who belong to the vehicle of the *pratyekas* experience the realm of emptiness within, and because of this do not cling to or get attached to the material world. This is still the path of the middle vehicle, not the bodhisattva path.

In other words, when you speak of emptiness, you are talking of your own state: the material world still exists as always. You can sit in meditation for ten thousand years, but the earth will still be rotating. The *pratyeka* vehicle is like this: the earth is made of the four great elements, and they still have not been emptied out by you. So are the two things, form and mind, absolutely separate? If they are, this is not the realm of the Tathagata. *The Surangama Sutra* says: "If your mind can transform things, then you are the same as the Tathagata." Mind and things have one source. This is the basic principle you must hold to. Genuine great success is impossible unless you can get to

the level where mind and things have one source. Just tending to one side or the other will not work.

Therefor for the *pratyekas*, "the supreme worldly dharma is completely realizing that form is equal to supreme birthlessness." It is knowing that birth is unborn. This text is always speaking of form, the phenomena of form: earth, water, fire, and wind. Yogacara analyzes the phenomena of form into three kinds—micro-level forms, macro-level forms, and forms included in phenomena. In this context, "in phenomena" means the realm of the conceptual consciousness. We ourselves can give birth to earth, water, fire, and wind, including the functions produced by material transformations. We must realize this.

The shastra says: "The accurate immediate awareness of Mahayana which is included in the wisdom of immediate realization of empty true nature is the characteristic of seeing the Path in Mahayana. It is only limited by the Mahayana vision of the Path."

Immediate realization of empty true nature is what the Zen School calls sudden enlightenment, the quantum leap. In terms of the principles of the teaching, it is immediate realization of the empty true nature [of all phenomena]. Once the realm of inherent emptiness appears, at this point wisdom opens into enlightenment, and *prajna* is achieved. All the adornments of immediate awareness of the Mahayana Path contained in the immediate realization of empty true nature come forth. Thus, when Pure Land realms appear before you, and you become buddha right where you stand, in theory these are realms of seeing the Path in Mahayana. Only after you see the Path do you cultivate the Path well. It is like seeing the rice and then cooking it. Seeing the Path is like seeing the rice; cultivating the Path is like putting the rice in the pot.

As for the boundaries of the Mahayana vision of the Path, right now I will not talk in terms of the Zen School's sudden enlightenment. I will just explain in terms of the principles of meditation work and seeing truth. The Buddhist teaching as a whole and the various sub-schools differ on this point. For example, according to the Pure Land School, you have already arrived when you recite "Hail to Amitabha Buddha." If we talk in terms of the principles of the teaching, many questions arise, such as: Why must we recite "Hail to Amitabha Buddha"? What is the principle behind reciting this? What method of mindfulness is this? All these involve the principles of the teachings. So there is a difference between the sub-schools and the teaching as a whole. But all people who have mastered one of the practical schools have mastered the theoretical teachings. But those who have mastered the theoretical teachings have not necessarily mastered one of the practical schools, because they have not done the work. You definitely must do the meditation work and seek realization. That is why the shastra says at this point: "It is only limited by the Mahayana vision of the Path." This is the way the principles of the teaching explain it and so I am using this approach to discuss sudden enlightenment.

The shastra says: "This means that people with the Mahayana vision of the Path have in their bodies the vision of the Path equipped with great merits and excellence."

The Bodhisattva Maitreya says, in *The Abhisamayalamkara Shastra*, that only when you have accomplished this merit within your body can you talk about seeing the Path. To see the Path you must rely on this body of flesh.

The shastra further says: "In the vision of the Path contained in the knowledge of the characteristics of the Path, there are sixteen moments." You see the Path in an instant. The Bodhisattva Maitreya distinguishes these for us.

The shastra continues: "The purity of the buddhas is the highest purity, because in the gate of cutting off errors in what does the curing and what is to be cured step by step, it allows those who cultivate the Path of Mahayana to follow the equality nature of the knowing subject and the real emptiness of the objects of knowing. This is the genuine remedy that can totally purify all the barriers of the three realms."

If we talk about the methods of corresponding remedies [for the sicknesses of sentient beings], studying Buddhism and cultivating the Path is not a single prescription that can cure a hundred illnesses. Buddhism's eighty-four thousand Dharma Gates are all methods of applying appropriate remedies. When you are cultivating practice, suddenly you empty out. After you have been empty for a long while, you sink into oblivion, and fall asleep. At this time you need a remedy: you need something that is not empty, so now you bring up existence. After a long while with existence, you then scatter in confusion. So when you sit and do meditation work, you need to understand the methods of the corresponding remedies.

Someone asked me: "Sometimes when I am reciting the buddha-name, reciting mantras, or doing visualizations, I do very well. How is it that afterwards it does not work anymore?"

The answer is because when you feel you are doing well, and in your mind you think, "This time I'm doing well! I am concentrating well!" in fact you are already scattering in confusion. The more you try, the more you are dragged off by scattering and confusion. Of course, this is not good, and you do not know the appropriate remedy. It will only work if people who cultivate practice know all about all sorts of methods, both inside and outside the Buddhist Path. When you are in a certain kind of realm, you must quickly cultivate a certain method. You cannot keep on with your original method: if you do, you will develop problems. In our mental condition, there are so many karmic barriers, and it is very hard to reach the proper adjustment. That's why there are eighty-four thousand different remedies. As the saying goes, "In the gate of the Dharma there are countless vows and methods of study." It is not limited to just one method. You will be wrong if you think that this method of yours is correct, and all the others are not.

Now the Bodhisattva Maitreya tells us the importance of all the pure methods of appropriate remedies. Only the pure realm of the buddhas is the comprehensive remedy. What does the curing and what is to be cured must be appropriately matched for it to work. For example, if we are scattered in confusion, we must cultivate cessation, and if we are sunk in oblivion, we must cultivate contemplation. If we fall into oblivion, we must refine the breath, but if we do that a lot, it may produce problems, so we must do it precisely to the right point. We must study all the various Dharma Gates that have to do with what acts as the remedy and what is to be remedied.

When we study the methods of appropriate remedies, what do we do? We "cut off errors step by step." We gradually transform our habit-energy. This course of lectures is about seeing truth, cultivating realization, and carrying out vows, but we have not yet talked about carrying out vows, and correcting behavior because it is so hard to do. The mistakes of habit-energy are impossible to cut off. But if you cannot cut off your mental activities and your habit-energy, then you cannot achieve the perfection of merit in your body, and so your meditation work cannot make progress. After the merit in your body is perfected, your body will spontaneously be in the process of transformation from second to second and from day to day, transforming toward the direction of excellence. This principle is invariable. This shastra has already enunciated it very clearly.

But here the shastra also tells us that habit-energies are cut off gradually step by step. As I said a little while ago, when we have attained *samadhi*, and our minds are pure, we cannot bear to see other people doing anything wrong. What's the reason for this? It's like when you have polished a mirror so it is very bright and clean. Not a speck of dust can fall on it. If any dust gets on it, you see it very clearly, and when you see it, you feel annoyed, and you want to rub it off. You cannot tolerate any dust and it makes you mad. Thus if you only like purity, and you do not like dust and dirt, this is because your merit is not complete. It is an error, and you must hurry up and cut it off. It won't do not to cut it off. This is all explained in the Buddhist scriptures. Cultivating practice is not that simple.

Therefore, in the Dharma Gate of "cutting off errors in what does the curing and what is to be cured step by step" is the Mahayana cultivation of the Path, because of "the equality nature of the knowing subject and the real emptiness of the objects of knowing." In the Mahayana realm of cultivating the Path, when false thoughts are emptied, and the pure fundamental nature emerges, this is inherent nature as the subject of purity. It will not do just to get the subject [pure], while getting rid of false thoughts and obliterating the object. "Subject and object both obliterated" won't do either. You must have "subject and object both fused." Thus the knowing subject and the real emptiness of the objects of knowing are equal and not separate: only this is called the great mind without discrimination. Only if you are like this can you "totally purify all the barriers of the three realms." This is the true appropriate remedy for all barriers and obstructions, since it does not fall into emptiness or get attached to existence.

These are all theoretical explanations. If you understand them, you will know that if you do not fall into emptiness or get attached to existence, then even the outside paths that you always study will be okay and you can cultivate all those methods that are attached to existence. Why so? Because you need to use them as appropriate remedies when you are attuning your mind. Thus, after you have learned a lot of knowledge, it is a great barrier, but after you have attained enlightenment, the fear is instead that you have not understood enough. Then the more you understand, the greater will be your skill in means in teaching and saving people. Therefore it says in *The Great Prajna Sutra*: "Great *prajna* is like a great flaming torch." No matter what is thrown into it, it is not afraid: good things, bad things, the more things that are thrown in, the greater the light of wisdom. A

person with the wisdom of *prajna* is not afraid if you are a follower of the outside paths, or if you are defiled with anything. Feel free to come. The more people that come, the greater the light of his *prajna* shines forth.

In another analogy, great *prajna* is likened to a peacock. Thus in Esoteric Buddhism there is a method of cultivation called the Illuminated Peacock King. Why is *prajna* likened to a peacock? Because peacocks specialize in eating things that are poisonous, like centipedes and scorpions, the more poisonous the better. After eating a lot of poisonous things, their feathers are more beautiful. If they have nothing poisonous to eat, their nutrition is spoiled. Thus, the great bodhisattvas can descend into hell, they can save sentient beings in any of the six planes of existence. When they eat poison, their feathers are even more glorious, and their wisdom is even greater. This is the reason that *prajna* is likened to a peacock. Therefore it is said that all the Dharma Gates are appropriate remedies.

The shastra says: "Here disputants say that the nine lowest grades of cultivating the Path eliminate the nine highest grades of clinging to the real, but this is not in accord with the truth."

Disputes had already arisen among the great Buddhist teachers of ancient times. They said that if you used the methods of the outside paths to cultivate the Supreme Path, you could not succeed, it was impossible. The argument here is that the nine lowest grades of cultivating the Path eliminate the nine highest grades of clinging to the real, but the shastra says there is no such principle, this is illogical.

The shastra continues: "For example, a weak man cannot overcome a strong opponent, but it does not take a strong man to overcome a weak opponent." In other words how can a person whose body is decrepit and weak defeat a strong enemy?

The shastra continues: "In this way low grade cultivation of the Path cannot eliminate high grade clinging to the real, and to cut off low grade clinging to the real does not require high grade cultivation of the Path."

If a person who cultivates low grade methods travels the wrong road, he definitely will not be able to achieve the high grade Buddha Path. Moreover, to cut off low grade habit-energy and deep defilements does not take a method of cultivation as lofty as *prajna*. This passage in the shastra shows people arguing over their opinions. It has been this way through the ages.

The shastra continues: "[The Bodhisattva Maitreya] answers: There is no mistake here. For example, when washing clothes, it does

not take careful work to wash away the coarse dirt, but to wash away the fine dirt takes careful work. The curative and what is to be cured must be adjusted like this." The Bodhisattva Maitreya says that this is not a problem. It is like when we wash clothes. If the garment is extremely filthy, then we use some effort. If it is not too dirty, then we wash it lightly and it is fine. The problem of low grade cultivation of the path is great, so working at it requires careful efforts. When the problem with the work is less severe, then it takes less cultivation. This is beyond question.

Chapter four of the shastra, "On Omniscience," says: "It is neither this shore nor that shore, and it does not dwell in between. It realizes the three worlds are all equal, so it is called the perfection of transcendent wisdom, *prajnaparamita*." By cultivating the Mahayana path, *prajna* is perfected. This is what the Zen School calls the Dharma Gate of sudden enlightenment.

The shastra continues: "Included in the wisdom of the immediate realization of no-self there is also a species of Hinayana immediate awareness, that is, the characteristic of omniscience, which includes all the sages, who all have it. It looks upon all worldly conventional things, refuting the notion of absolute existence. It has immediate awareness of a species of Mahayana sagely wisdom, that is, the marks of the knowledge of the characteristics of the path of wisdom not abiding in the three forms of existence. Its boundaries extend from the Mahayana vision of the Path to the stage of buddhahood. It looks upon all worldly conventional things, refuting the notion of peaceful extinction. It has immediate awareness of a species of Mahayana sagely wisdom, that is, the marks of the knowledge of the characteristics of the path of compassion not abiding in peaceful extinction. Its boundaries extend from the Mahayana vision of the Path to the stage of buddhahood."

Now the shastra talks of Mahayana, the Great Vehicle. This is what the Zen School calls sudden enlightenment right where you stand. Every day you seek enlightenment. After you are enlightened, what is if for? How good it is not to be enlightened. When you are not enlightened, this world is a lot of fun to play in. After you are enlightened, the world is like a dream, and what's the fun in that? If it is no fun, why should you study?

There are two objectives in studying Buddhism and cultivating the Path: so that "out of wisdom you do not dwell in the three forms of being, and out of compassion you do not enter nirvana." This is entering the world, not leaving the world. The realm of the Mahayana

bodhisattvas is by means of wisdom, not to dwell in the world, and by means of compassion, not to enter nirvana. Simply put, the combined operation of wisdom and compassion is the bodhisattva path. Or to put it another way, it is the path of the joint cultivation of wisdom and compassion. When you reach the point where wisdom is complete and merit is complete, this is the fruit of buddhahood. The combined operation of wisdom and compassion is the same principle.

For people who cultivate the Path, in the first step of their meditation work, they must realize "no self" [the identitylessness of all relative phenomena]. Included within this realm of wisdom is a species of Hinayana immediate awareness, that is the Hinayana realm's omniscience that sees the emptiness of all things, that sees the realm of emptiness. Within the scope of this, "it includes all the sages, and they all have it." All those who are sages see this aspect of emptiness. This statement is very forthright, and very great. Anyone who is a sage, no matter whether a Confucian, or a Taoist, or a member of any other religion, is sure to see the aspect of emptiness. Only then can he or she be called a sage.

"It looks upon all worldly conventional things, refuting the notion of absolute existence. It has immediate awareness of a species of Mahayana sagely wisdom." Looking upon the world with this wisdom, you feel a great sense of aversion, and you want to leave the world to cultivate the Path. "Look upon" includes the meaning of "regarding" and "treating."

With emptiness, you refute the idea that worldly things are absolutely existent. As the shastra says: "It has immediate awareness of a species of Mahayana sagely wisdom, that is, the marks of the knowledge of the characteristics of the path of wisdom not abiding in the three forms of existence." At the level of theory, you reach the point where "wisdom does not abide in the three forms of existence." That is, at the level of seeing truth, you see emptiness. But if you fall onto the side of emptiness, this is the lesser vehicle, this is Hinayana.

What's more, that realm of emptiness of yours is still not the ultimate. The great teacher Han-shan said this of people who see emptiness: "It is easy to set foot in the thicket of brambles, but it is hard to transform the body under the curtain in the bright moonlight." People who see emptiness in the Mahayana way do so as the Bodhisattva Kuan-tzu-tsai [another name for Kuan-yin] said: "Form itself is emptiness, and emptiness itself is form; form is no different from

emptiness, and emptiness is no different from form." The nonduality of form and emptiness: this is "the mark of the knowledge of the characteristics of the path of wisdom not abiding in the three forms of existence." This realm extends from the Mahayana vision of the Path to the stage of the fruit of buddhahood; the principle of compassion not entering nirvana is the same.

The shastra says: "The perfection of transcendent wisdom, the bodhisattvas' path of omniscience, because of its wisdom, does not dwell on this shore, the shore of birth and death, and because of its compassion, does not dwell on the other shore, the shore of nirvana. Nor, in its supreme non-abiding, does it dwell in between these two shores. Thus it refutes both sides, because of the immediate awareness contained in the wisdom of the immediate realization of empty true nature."

What does a person who has realized the Path, a person who in Zen terms has awakened to the Path, awaken to? He or she awakens to *prajnaparamita*, the perfection of transcendental wisdom. After awakening to the Path, wisdom does not dwell in birth and death, and compassion does not enter nirvana. "Birth and death and nirvana are equally flowers in the sky." This is precisely the meaning of what the boatman Ch'eng said when he received Chia-shan: "Hide your body where there are no traces, but where there are no traces do not hide your body." That is, don't let your wisdom dwell in the three forms of being [where there are traces], and don't let your compassion enter [the traceless state of] nirvana.

The people in China's Zen School who genuinely realized the Path, and saw the Path, did not just have a bit of purity, and or a bit of experiential realm where their thoughts were one-sidedly focused on emptiness. Thus we must pay a lot of attention to how the founders of the Zen Schools like Lin-chi and Tung-shan and Ts'ao-shan cultivated practice and saw the truth. We must carefully read Shih Ch'eng-chin's *The Zen School's Direct Pointing: The Great Matter*. The examples he cites are very good: they all tell of realms of genuine cultivation and genuine realization in accord with the scriptures. Only this is enlightenment and realization of the Path. Don't think you are enlightened because you have a little mystical experience, or a little purity, or a bit of minor emptiness.

The shastra says: "The *skandha* of form is equal to empty true nature, but it is what binds us to the phenomena of past, present, and future. The enlightening factors of giving, discipline, patience, energy,

concentration, and wisdom are antidotes to the *skandhas* of synthesis and conception."

Although all of you are cultivating practice, you have still not gotten clear about the phenomena of form. If you are unable to break through the material world composed of the four great elements, then if you want to talk about achieving enlightenment, you will be deceiving yourselves. How can you empty out the material world? Eating is a phenomenon of form, but if you do not keep packing in the phenomenon of form [food] you eat, it won't do. If a person doesn't eat, he or she can die: it's this serious. So how can you empty it out?

Why is form placed first among the five *skandhas*: form, sensation, conception, synthesis, and consciousness? This is because this one *skandha* of form is very hard to break through. The Chinese translations for *skandha* are very meaningful. One Chinese term for *skandha* is *yun*, which means "contain": we are contained in the *skandhas*, locked up there. Another translation for *skandha* is *yin*, which means "shadow:" because of the *skandhas* we cannot see.

The shastra says that: "The *skandha* of form is equal to empty true nature." All of us who study Buddhism sometimes by chance purify the sixth consciousness for a moment, and it is easy to say that it is emptied out. But we cannot empty out the phenomena of form. How can we empty them out? Only by cultivating realization.

The shastra says: "It is what binds us to the phenomena of past, present, and future." For all the sentient beings of the past, present, and future, these three times really tie us down. The *skandha* of form, the power of the material world, always hangs us up there. It is not only the things we are tied to in our present lives, but also the past and the future that hang us up.

Say that a certain person has spiritual powers. You should ask him just one question: what is the thing that does not exist in this world? I guarantee he will not be able to say. This is because no matter whether a person is dreaming or has spiritual powers or is mentally ill, anything he can talk about is something people can imagine. What cannot be imagined, no one has ever seen. You can observe this by looking at the world's various religions: the gods and the heavens of foreign countries all possess the characteristics of those foreign countries; for instance, the Chinese gods look Chinese. The culture and thought of different regions is not the same, and their concept of heaven therefore changes accordingly. It is really interesting to investigate things from this aspect. Our Chinese Jade Emperor is just a god in our human form, and yet he still can command the earth below.

He has a walled city, just like our Chinese political organizations. The Western god is in the form of a Westerner, and his heaven organized in Western fashion. In the end it boils down to the verse in the shastra: "The *skandha* of form is equal to empty true nature, but it is what binds us to the phenomena of past, present, and future."

Neither our thought nor our learning can leap beyond the bounds of the material world, so how can we then leap beyond the three realms of desire, form, and formlessness?

The shastra says: "The enlightening factors of giving, discipline, patience, energy, concentration, and wisdom are antidotes to the *skandhas* of synthesis and conception." The cultivation methods of the six *paramitas*, namely giving charity, upholding discipline, being patient when mistreated, making energetic progress, meditative concentration, and transcendent wisdom, along with the thirty-seven components of the Path, and the seven degrees of awakening, and so on—all these enlightening factors are all methods of applying appropriate remedies to the *skandhas* of synthesis and conception.

Do not say that we cannot detach from thinking. Even if you can detach from thinking, the *skandha* of synthesis, that capacity for life, is even harder to deal with. For example, when we are sleeping, it is possible for thinking not to operate, but our blood circulation is always moving as long as we are alive, and in all our living cells, the new is always replacing the old. This is the function of the *skandha* of synthesis. The *skandha* of synthesis is the thing between the seventh consciousness and the eighth consciousness.

Thus, when all of you talk about emptiness at times, what have you emptied? You have not been able to empty the *skandha* of synthesis at all. Even if you manage to get to the stage where the breath stops, this still doesn't count. You must get to the stage where the energy channels within your body all stop. You only have control over the *skandha* of synthesis when you have cultivated practice to the point that you can stop your heart and your pulse when you want to, and bring them back to life when you want to. Only when you are able to control the *skandha* of synthesis can you make efforts without following off after the power of karma. This at last can be called cultivating practice.

If you have not reached this level, don't talk about meditation work. If you say your field of elixir is generating heat, and your nostrils send out white smoke, these are all things that the *skandha* of conception can do. All it takes is a little practice to do these things. This is a question of false thought, this is not meditation work.

10

BODHISATTVA PRACTICES

One of our fellow students raised a very good question in his notes. He said that after listening to the lecture, he felt that studying Buddhism is a very very difficult affair. Because he has read many Buddhist sutras, he knew a method which he himself called "the method of laziness." What kind of laziness? He did not want to be reborn in the Western Paradise of Amitabha Buddha—that's too far away. And he did not want to be reborn in the eastern world of the Medicine King Bodhisattva—that's not easy either. He simply wanted to be reborn in the Tushita Heaven, the land of the Bodhisattva Maitreya.

The Tushita Heaven is the center of the heavens of the realm of desire. Before they come down to be born in this world and attain buddhahood, all the quasi-buddhas, that is, the tenth stage bodhisattvas, and the final incarnations of those who have attained awakening virtually equal to the buddhas, and the wondrous awakening of the buddhas—they are all lords in the Tushita Heaven. The Tushita Heaven is still part of the realm of desire. In it there are the desires for food and drink and sex the same as in the human world, but it is a different realm.

In the Tushita Heaven is the inner court of Maitreya. Maitreya's inner court is absolutely pure. *The Yogacarabhumi Shastra* that we have just been hearing about is a text expounded by the Bodhisattva Maitreya in his inner court. The Bodhisattva Asanga, by the power of his *samadhi*, had ascended there: at night he would listen to Maitreya's teachings and then by day he would come back down to Earth and record what he had heard. The story goes that this shastra was completed in this way. Modern scholars in general, and particularly European and American scholars, do not believe this sort of thing and think that Asanga wrote this book, but we are not going to discuss this particular question.

Many great bodhisattvas have vowed to be born in the Tushita Heaven of the Bodhisattva Maitreya. When the next age starts, they will accompany the Bodhisattva Maitreya when he comes down to be born on Earth, and come with him to the human world to save people here.

When this student read this scripture, he thought: "Not bad, there's a shortcut here." To be reborn in the Pure Land in the West, in reciting the buddha-name you must recite it to the point that your mind is unified and free from confusion. To be born in the Tushita Heaven all it takes is that your faith and vows are solid and firm: all that's necessary to succeed is that you do good, and make a vow to be reborn there. When you vow to be reborn there, you will accompany the Bodhisattva Maitreya in the future when he comes down to be born again in this world, just as Ananda and Shariputra accompanied Shakyamuni Buddha. There are many examples of people who vowed to be reborn in the Tushita Heaven and be born again on earth to study with the Bodhisattva Maitreya: in ancient times, the Bodhisattva Asanga; in recent times, Dharma master T'ai-hsu; a few years before him, the Dharma master Tz'u-hang, whose body did not decompose; and many Buddhist monks and nuns and laypeople in the past in mainland China.

This method is very correct. Moreover, it is obvious that this student worked very hard to find in the Taisho Canon "The Scripture Spoken by Buddha of the Contemplation of the Bodhisattva Maitreya Ascending to the Tushita Heaven." A Zen master had a saying: "A leech clinging to an egret's leg said, 'When you go to heaven so will I.'" To wait until the Bodhisattva Maitreya comes down to save people here on Earth, and follow him down, and become his disciple: this method is very correct.

Now let us continue with our discussion concerning *The Abhisamayalamkara Shastra*, chapter four, "On Omniscience." The shastra says: "If you arouse the slightest clinging or bondage to the realm of buddhahood, or to such things as the cultivation of prostrations, even though these are bases for the provisions of merit, and can act as antidotes for lack of faith and so on, and are thus antidotes used on the bodhisattva path, this is a deviation."

This passage says that we people who cultivate practice cannot arouse any clingings or attachments to the realm of buddhahood. If we arouse the slightest clinging or attachment, this can block the Path.

Doing prostrations before Buddha is very important. This is particularly true in Esoteric Buddhism, where the first condition is that you must do a hundred thousand great prostrations in front of Buddha. In years gone by, while I was studying Buddhism, when I was told to have faith, I had faith, and when I was told to do prostrations, I did prostrations. Without spreading anything on the ground, every morning and evening I made sure to do one hundred prostrations very strictly according to the rules. As Confucius said, "Sacrifice to the spirits as if the spirits were present." When you do prostrations before Buddha, feel as though Buddha is right there in front of you. If you say you still cannot generate this state of mind, and you have doubts even when doing prostrations before Buddha, this is the profound arrogance brought about by your bad karma.

People who study Buddhism must do prostrations before Buddha. Confucius said: "There are three things a profound person is in awe of: he is in awe of great men, he is in awe of the mandate of Heaven, and he is in awe of the words of the sages." People must find something to be afraid of. If there is nothing that arouses respect and reverence in your mind, then the mind of reverence cannot arise, and you will certainly not be able to concentrate your mind.

This is especially true when you are studying the Buddhist Path. It will be very difficult to get on the right track in examining yourself if you have not generated a respectful and reverent state of mind. Therefore, to study Mahayana Buddhism, you should first study *The Hua-yen Sutra*'s chapter on the vows of the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra. You must make each and every one of these ten great vows. Having reverence for others is having reverence for yourself: the reason for this is very profound. Nevertheless, when your cultivation reaches the final stage, you must abandon everything. You cannot even be attached to the realm of buddhahood.

The shastra says: "It is said that the supreme truth is hard to comprehend, because it is only experienced with the ultimate inner wisdom, by dispensing with what language and judgments based on sensory experience are capable of knowing. Furthermore, the supreme truth is called inconceivable, because language and judgments cannot understand that from sense objects on up to the reality that is unique to the buddhas, the nature of worldly phenomena, their ultimate real nature, can only be seen by the fundamental wisdom of the sages."

The supreme truth is the highest truth, the ultimate truth: it is also the basic essence above form. This Path is very hard to understand. It cannot be expressed in words. All that can be said is: "It is like a person drinking water and knowing for himself whether it is cold or warm." When the internal wisdom has gotten free of the material world, and is beyond the limits of verbal theorizing, and has broken through all of this, only then is it the supreme truth. This is the reason that the Zen School does not establish verbal formulations.

Why does Buddha say that the supreme truth is inconceivable? This is said in reference to the basic essence of seeing the Path, because there are no words that can describe that basic essence, and it cannot be understood from knowledge of the material world. This is the unique reality that Buddha speaks of, the true nature of phenomena that transcends all concrete facts. If you see this basic essence, this real nature, then you are a sage, you have the basic wisdom to become a sage. But to ordinary people, this is inconceivable—only things at the level of form are conceivable.

The shastra says: "All the various defiled phenomena brought about by interdependent causation do not really exist. They appear only because of clingings and attachments and habit-energies, so they are likened to things in dreams."

All the things and events in the world are all due to the joining together of defiled causes and conditions. All the phenomena of interdependent causation dependent on defiled causes are false. They are like dreams, like illusions. They are all manifestations of the habit-energies of the eighth consciousness, the *alaya* consciousness. All the realms that you experience when you sit in meditation, no matter whether feelings of emptiness, or light, or all the hundreds and thousands of kinds of strange manifestations, all of these are engendered by the seeds in the *alaya* consciousness. Thus *The Diamond Sutra* says: "Whatever has form is all empty and false. If you see that all forms are not form, this is seeing the Tathagata." You must totally empty out all forms. Why? Because any kind of manifestation is always a transformation of the habit-energy of the seeds held to by the *alaya* consciousness. They are all false forms, they are not real.

Many people ask about the various kinds of manifestations that appear when they do sitting meditation. In reality, these are superfluous things. If you have studied and mastered the principles of the teachings, you know that these are all part of the process. Even if you become a great arhat, and develop all of the six spiritual powers, these, too, are just manifestations of the habit-energies and seeds of the *alaya* consciousness. They are not the ultimate, and they are not enlightenment. You must comprehend this truth thoroughly. If you comprehend this thoroughly, then you may go through a process of many experiential realms but you won't be full of doubts, and at each step of the way you will know that the next step will also be transformed and that every experiential realm will change and depart.

At a previous session one of our fellow students said that when he sits down to meditate, as soon as he closes his eyes, many illusory scenes appear before him. He asked where these illusory scenes come from. The answer is that these scenes are brought about by the seeds in the *alaya* consciousness. Fundamentally, they are brought about by the fatigue of the optic nerve, linked with the subconscious mind, which thinks that some of them are spirits, and others are demons. In reality, how could there be demons? Demons are your own creations, they are all transformations of your own habit-energies. You must recognize this principle clearly.

The shastra says in part one of chapter five, "The Immediate Awareness that Perfects All Characteristics":

> In this there are three divisions: the characteristics that follow the omniscience possessed by the *shravakas* and disciples; the characteristics that follow the knowledge of the signs of the Path possessed by the bodhisattvas; and the characteristics of omniscience unique to the buddhas.
>
> The first means that [the *shravakas*] use their wisdom to observe these specific characteristics: that the defiled body is impure, that sensation is painful, that mind is impermanent, and that phenomena have no independent identities. They also observe that impermanence, suffering, emptiness, and identitylessness are all the common characteristics of true emptiness. They abide peacefully in correct mindfulness, that is, the four forms of mindfulness whose nature is linked to the four items, [the impurity of] the body, [the suffering involved in] sensation, [the impermanence of] the mind, and [the identitylessness of] phenomena. They cultivate the common and specific characteristics of each of these. With the immediate awareness of entering the Path and the mindfulness of wisdom that follows, they cultivate in order to enter the taking and relinquishing of the four noble truths. When things that are not good have already been born, they cut them off. When things that are not good have not yet been born, they do not let them be born. When good things have already been born, they make them increase. When good things have not yet been born, they enable them to be born. These are the four forms of correct effort.

This passage tells us about the first step of cultivating practice. First we must observe emptiness, observe impermanence, suffering,

emptiness, and identitylessness. First we practice on the basis of the four noble truths of Hinayana. No form of practice can depart from the four forms of mindfulness associated with the four basic tenets of existence.

Here the most important part is at the end of the passage. "When things that are not good have already been born, they cut them off. When things that are not good have not yet been born, they do not let them be born." Things that are not good means bad karma. We must carefully examine ourselves. If there are bad thoughts in the habit-energy of our usual thinking, we must cut them off ourselves. This is the first step of cultivating practice. This is also carrying out vows. For evil thoughts that have not yet been born, we must prevent them from being born.

You must pay attention to this statement in the shastra. If you are really a person who cultivates practice, when you read this statement, you will start to shake. Why? You feel that ordinarily, when you have no evil dispositions, this is only because they have not yet become manifest. Even when the best, most virtuous people are being extremely good, they can arouse very evil dispositions. If you do not always examine yourself and discover these, this can be a very, very serious matter. When we read through the materials of the Sung and Ming Dynasty Neo-Confucians, we see that at the same time that they were doing good things, they were also committing great evils, and they did not even know they were doing so.

So practicing virtue and nurturing meritorious actions is not that simple if you want *prajna*, the highest wisdom. Sometimes you feel that you are being very strict and correct, but in reality you are doing evil things every day. This is how hard it is to carry out your vows! Anyone considers his or her bit of subjective knowledge and his or her little bit of learning correct, but once we reflect on them with fundamental wisdom, we see they are always the biggest evil thoughts. Therefore "when things that are not good have already been born, to cut them off, and when things that are not good have not yet been born, not to let them be born" is the hardest thing to do.

The shastra says: "When good things have already been born, they make them increase. When good things have not yet been born, they enable them to be born." When we examine ourselves from a psychological standpoint, in our own mental activities over the twenty-four hours of the day, is there any thought that is genuinely good? Suppose a person who cultivates practice genuinely and rigorously examines his or her own mental nature. The person can see in the course of a day which thoughts are truly totally good, but also sees that the great majority of the time he or she is just passing the day in muddled confusion. There's no need to talk of having good things in his or her behavior: there are not even any totally good thoughts that have arisen.

You might say, "I am reciting the buddha-name." But that is mindless recitation, reciting the buddha-name on one hand while the six sense faculties are still running around in confusion all over the place. Even if you can concentrate exclusively on reciting the buddha-name, that can only be called a method of cultivating practice. It has definitely not really raised the level of good provisions of merit. It is not that strict.

Thus, everyone talks as they please about the Zen School, or some other schools of Buddhism. But if you want to advance without raising your level of merit one bit, you will not be able to do it, it will be impossible! If your mental state is transformed by a certain amount, and you have raised your level of goodness by a certain amount, then your wisdom can move forward a step. This is a fixed rule. That's why some elderly friends have worked so many years on their meditation without being able to get on the right track at all. Don't think that you can advance just by sitting in meditation and attaining *samadhi*. If you do not arouse your roots of goodness, if you do not nurture the roots of goodness and merit, how can you advance?

Thus the shastra says: "When good things have already been born, they make them increase." When you examine yourself and discover that you really have a certain bit of good karma, and the root has already sprouted, you must make it increase and grow. As for the good that has not yet been born, "When good things have not yet been born, enable them to be born."

These four forms of correct effort spoken of above are included in the thirty-seven components of the Path. They are forms of conduct we must work hard to cultivate and practice. In this section everything is about the thirty-seven components of the Path. There is not enough time to say much about them, so you should go study them carefully on your own.

The shastra says: "First gather yourself together and establish yourself on the path of provisions. Next gather yourself together and establish yourself in the four intensified practices. Establishing yourself on the branches of the holy path is called seeing the Path. Establishing yourself in the enlightening factors is called cultivating the Path."

The Bodhisattva Maitreya tells us that if we want to cultivate practice, we must not be lacking in even one of what the exoteric teaching calls the thirty-seven components of the Path. This is the gate of practice. At all times you must strictly examine yourself and reflect back on yourself. Only if you are fully equipped with these thirty-seven components of the Path, do you have the foundation for studying Buddhism.

The first step is to "gather yourself together and establish yourself on the path of provisions." Only then can you be counted as having the capital fund to cultivate practice. If you go on confused in your thoughts and your deeds, and you do not match up your true virtuous conduct with your actions, then your provisions are insufficient. In other words, if you want to cultivate practice, if you want to realize the Path, you won't have the basic capital to do so. This is the same as in business. If you don't have capital funds, what's there to talk about? Your cultivating practice cannot be separated from virtuous conduct, this path of provisions. Only after you have established yourself on the path of provisions can you talk of doing meditation work.

Sitting in meditation, cultivating realization—this is the four intensified practices. Thus, by cultivating the practice of sitting meditation and the four intensified practices and making progress, you can awaken to the Path. "Establishing yourself on the branches of the holy path is called seeing the Path." In the basic path of seeing true nature, what is called "illuminating mind and seeing true nature" is seeing the Path. After seeing the Path you cultivate the Path. "Establishing yourself in the enlightening factors is called cultivating the Path." Finally you penetrate through in great enlightenment. This is the process the Bodhisattva Maitreya tells us about.

You have not established the basis in mental activity for cultivating practice, but you already want to travel the high road, and follow the Supreme Path. You think that you have already awakened to the Path, so what's the need for you to study Zen and sit in meditation. There are too many people who waste their whole lives in this crazy way. Such people fail to examine themselves as to whether or not they have generated the mind of goodness and whether or not they have abundant provisions for the Path. Those who study the Mahayana Path must pay attention to the fact that this means coordinating the four intensified practices of the bodhisattvas—warming, the peak, forbearance, and the supreme worldly dharma—with the work of sitting meditation.

In volume 3 of *The Abhisamayalamkara Shastra*, part two of chapter five, "The Immediate Awareness that Perfects All Characteristics," it says:

> The basic wisdom of the Mahayana path of intensified practice eliminates clinging to the realms it links with. This is called supreme nonabiding in form and the other *skandhas*. It eliminates clinging to the mind that does the linking. This is called intensified practice at the level of the real truth without intensified practice at the supreme level of form and the other *skandhas*. True thusness in which form equals true emptiness is very profound. The real nature of all the paths is hard to fathom. The real nature of all the forms of practice is without measure. Comprehending these five intensified practices is distinguished by intensified practice itself.

In the four intensified practices of studying the Mahayana Path, coordinating meditation work and seeing truth is even more difficult. How does the Bodhisattva Maitreya explain it? The fundamental wisdom of the Mahayana Path is illuminating mind and seeing true nature, seeing emptiness. The fundamental Hinayana wisdom leans one-sidedly toward emptiness. The fundamental wisdom of the middle vehicle, the *pratyeka* vehicle, leans toward emptiness but lets a bit of illusory existence arise. For Mahayana fundamental wisdom, emptiness and existence are identical. Thus the four phrases in *The Heart Sutra* cover all three vehicles. "Form is empty" is the Dharma Gate of the Hinayana arhats. "Emptiness is form" is the Dharma Gate of the *pratyekas*. "Form is no different from emptiness, emptiness is no different from form," is the Dharma Gate of the bodhisattvas. Thus, because the order of cultivating practice and doing meditation work is not the same in the three vehicles, the degrees of attainment are not the same. Because there is no time to discuss this in detail, all I can do is present the general outline.

Now we must discuss the fundamental wisdom of the Mahayana Path. According to the shastra, it "eliminates clinging to the realms it links with." This material world of ours is the realm we link with, the realm we take as an object. And when you are sitting in meditation, and you visualize bodhisattvas appearing or a light appearing, or when the three channels and seven chakras in your body open, all of these are realms that you link with. You must "eliminate clinging"

to these. You must not dwell in realms of the phenomena of form. You must detach from the material world, and you must empty out all psychological realms.

You should take note of the middle section of this passage from the shastra. "True thusness, in which form equals true emptiness, is very profound. The real nature of all the paths is hard to fathom. The real nature of all the forms of practice is without measure."

The phenomena of form are the four great elements of earth, water, fire, and wind, and include everything in the material world. The material world is fundamentally empty, but this is emptiness that is identical to form. Therefore, the principle of the basic essence of the "True thusness in which form equals true emptiness," the basic essence that is the single source of mind and things, is very profound. When you experience empty true nature, and awaken to the Path, you will not necessarily be able to transform these material things. Thus it is easy to say that "Mind can transform things," but it is very difficult for your meditation work to genuinely realize this. When the shastra says, "The real nature of all the paths is hard to fathom," it means that the basic essence of the inherent nature of all phenomena is inconceivable, and there is no way to assess it with thought.

"The real nature of all the forms of practice is without measure." Pay attention to this. The true nature of all the bodhisattva practices, all the forms of practice such as compassion and joyful renunciation which they give rise to in their minds, is boundless and without measure. They have all sorts of methods, all sorts of Dharma Gates. The Path of Confucius and Mencius is also like this. They both called upon you to treat people with an attitude of respect and reverence. Thus you should not treat anyone disrespectfully or talk to anyone in a peremptory fashion. There are many exalted and profound bodhisattvas and physical manifestations of buddha who have "secret practice." They appear one way on the surface, but their inner hearts are not that way. If you do not perceive this clearly, and you talk to them as you please in a peremptory manner, you have already committed a fault, a very serious fault! Sometimes you may incur the punishment of hell by such behavior. You must not think that you see things clearly. To see clearly is far from easy! Any small fault brings its karmic results.

The shastra says: "Comprehending these five intensified practices is distinguished by intensified practice itself." In other words, comprehending the five kinds of intensified practice given above is distinguished by relying on the meditation work and the basic essence of intensified practice.

The shastra says: "The wisdom of bodhisattvas with dull faculties in the path of provisions is often alarmed by and afraid of the nature of true emptiness."

Some people want to sit in meditation every day and seek emptiness, but when their meditation work succeeds, and the realm of true emptiness comes to them, they are terrified. These are bodhisattvas of dull faculties; they are bodhisattvas at the level of the causal basis, but they have not yet realized the fruit. Those of us without the experience of genuine cultivation of practice do not know that when people work hard and really arrive at the realm of emptiness, they can really become afraid. What they call "walking into the fire and going among demons" in Chinese novels about wandering fighters (knights) who right wrongs also describes the bodhisattvas of dull faculties.

The shastra says: "[Bodhisattvas of dull faculties] must work diligently according to the intensified practices for bodhisattvas at the first stage of the work. They must persevere for a long time, and only then will they be able to become buddhas. This is called the intensified practice of long term hard work."

These bodhisattvas of dull faculties cannot take the road of sudden enlightenment, so they must follow the road of gradual practice and proceed very slowly. When emptiness comes to them, they will feel fear. If their provisions of merit are not sufficient, sometimes they will go mad. Once they have gone mad, they immediately enter the plane of existence of the *asuras* and ghosts.

In the future, when all you bodhisattvas in the audience here are guiding people, even if you have the ability to make people experience empty true nature, you can never do this carelessly. Guiding people is very difficult. You must observe their provisions of merit, the merit that is their karmic reward from previous lives, and devise ways to purify their false thoughts. Only then will it work properly. If you let them witness empty true nature too quickly, problems will develop immediately. You cannot make a poor boy get rich all at once: as soon as he has money, he will be beset by afflictions and pain. It's the same in this case. So to guide people, you must observe their basic capacity.

This type of bodhisattvas, who are at the elementary level, need a comparatively long period of effort before they will be able to succeed. Therefore the intensified practice for this kind of bodhisattva is called "the intensified practice of long term hard work."

The shastra says: "In the Mahayana path of intensified practice, the stage of warming means developing fearlessness from empty true nature. This is called the intensified practice of receiving the prediction of enlightenment."

When you arrive at the great bodhisattvas' stage of warming, you do not need to talk about energy channels or bright points, because these are no more than the first steps of arriving at the stage of warming. When you really reach the stage of warming, these things are no longer worth talking about. The stage of warming that belongs to the bodhisattva path has already transcended these. At this point, because you have complete realization of empty true nature, you attain the wisdom of fearlessness. Thus the intensified practice of this stage is called "the intensified practice of receiving the prediction of enlightenment."

The shastra says: "In the Mahayana path of intensified practice, the stage of the peak surpasses the stage of warming. It means hearing and accepting *prajna* and the like. Thus it is called the intensified practice without regression."

This means realizing empty true nature by means of *prajna*, transcendent wisdom. *Prajna* includes five spheres, five aspects. The first is "reality aspect *prajna*." The reality aspect is the basic essence, true thusness, seeing the Path. The second is "the *prajna* of the realms." *Prajna* has its own realms of experience. A person who has attained the wisdom of *prajna* and awakened to the Path is able to comprehend all realms of experience. The third is "the *prajna* of words," that spontaneously comprehends all words brilliantly. The fourth is "the *prajna* of accompaniments." A person who has achieved genuine great wisdom assembles together all sorts of virtuous practices, like giving charity, upholding discipline, being patient with mistreatment, energetic progress, and meditative concentration. The fifth is "the *prajna* of skill in means." It understands all the methods of teaching, and is equipped with all the skillful means for benefiting self and others, so it is called *prajna*, transcendent wisdom. *The Heart Sutra* and *The Diamond Sutra* emphasize reality aspect *prajna*. The wisdom of the characteristics of the Path and the fundamental wisdom which the Bodhisattva Maitreya expounds are both included within reality aspect *prajna*.

Since the great bodhisattva's stage of the peak goes beyond the stage of warming, it has already perfected *prajna*, so it is called "the intensified practice without regression."

The shastra says: "In the Mahayana path of intensified practice, the stage of forbearance means detaching from such obstructions as the *shravaka* and *pratyeka* vehicles and intentional actions. Thus it is called the intensified practice of detaching and moving beyond." When you have arrived at the stage of forbearance in the Mahayana path, you have already gone beyond the Hinayana realms of the *shravakas* and *pratyekas*, so this stage of intensified practice is called "the intensified practice of detaching and moving beyond."

The shastra says: "In the Mahayana path of intensified practice, the stage of the supreme worldly dharma means seeing the correct basis for the Path and always cultivating the Dharma. Thus, it is called uninterrupted intensified practice." The supreme worldly dharma of the Mahayana path is seeing the Path, the correct basis for truly achieving buddhahood, and constantly cultivating this Dharma. Therefore it is called "uninterrupted intensified practice." This is because you exert yourself uninterruptedly: "If you renew yourself daily, you renew yourself day after day, and keep renewing yourself everyday." This goes beyond the stage without regression.

The shastra says: "Seeing the Path in Mahayana is what the stainless Dharma of the Mahayana Path depends on, so it is called the intensified practice of approaching great enlightenment. With the wisdom of the second to the seventh stages, bodhisattvas will soon be able to achieve the fruit of the *dharmakaya*, so it is called the added practice of imminent attainment of great enlightenment. The wisdom of the eighth stage is the pure wisdom that is able to turn the wheel of the Dharma universally toward beings of all three kinds of seed-nature, so it is called the intensified practice of benefiting others."

All the perception of truth and the cultivation of realization of bodhisattvas before the eighth stage is in the category of benefiting oneself. Only from the eighth stage onward, can the bodhisattvas' attainments encompass practices that benefit others. They have still not reached the fruit of becoming buddhas. With the categories in this passage, the Bodhisattva Maitreya is telling us all about the sequence of steps in the work of cultivating practice. You must investigate them for yourself.

Previously, we mentioned that *The Surangama Sutra* talks about fifty realms of delusion that occur when cultivating *samadhi*. *The Abhisamayalamkara Shastra* tells us there are forty-six realms of delusion, for the shastra says: "You must realize that there are forty-six kinds of faults. If in your intensified practices you give rise to

delusions that make it difficult for you to abide in completeness or follow oneness, this is the criterion for faults in intensified practice. From the time before you enter the Path, up until you reach the seventh stage of bodhisattvas, there are forty-six kinds of delusions associated with faults in intensified practice. There are twenty of these that depend on situations of you yourself transgressing."

Sometimes in cultivating practice you run into obstacles. These obstacles are called realms of delusion. For example, you are sitting in meditation, and doing well, when unexpectedly something happens at home, or you get sick with a cold, and there are many obstacles. When you are not cultivating practice, nothing happens, but the more you cultivate practice, the more things happen. Because your provisions of merit are not complete, obstacles arise one after another. Among the forty-six realms of delusion, there are twenty which come about because of "situations of you yourself transgressing." You must pay special attention to these and check them out.

Thus, the Buddha Dharma requires us to be checking up on ourselves at all times, and to be raising our level of vigilance at all times. If there is the least deviation, it will not work. Sometimes there is not even a single thread separating so-called right and wrong, enlightenment and delusion. The Bodhisattva Maitreya has analyzed matters very clearly here.

These forty-six realms of delusion are principally in reference to our perception. They have nothing to do with the concepts of demons and ghosts that are generally talked about [with the Chinese word *mo*, which is used in Buddhism in the more abstract sense of delusion].

The shastra says: "By transforming form and the other *skandhas*, [the bodhisattvas] are ceaselessly putting an end to doubt and confusion. They themselves dwell peacefully in virtue, and they enable others to dwell there peacefully too." This passage is very important. There is an important test for people who are studying Buddhism: the more we have transformed our physical bodies, the more we know what we are doing.

If the karmic power of the physical body is still at a coarse and heavy level, the sense of ease and peace cannot come forth. In that case, even if your experiential realm is good, and your perception of truth is lofty, and you have no false thoughts and are pure, and you see emptiness, this is all false. Most of your meditation work is like a blind cat bumping into a dead rat. It is like a sickness where one day you get chills and the next day you run a fever. Today you develop chills, tomorrow you develop a fever. Today you improve a bit, and tomorrow you have a relapse. The day after tomorrow you recover a bit again, and suddenly you are not right again. It is like having a malaria attack: first you feel cold, and then you are hot. All your meditative accomplishments are unreliable, because you have not transformed the karmic power of the physical body.

For bodhisattvas, however, since they have transformed their physical bodies, there are no more doubts or confusions. At this point, they dwell peacefully in virtue. Only then can they benefit themselves and benefit others. Only then are they qualified to be people's teachers.

The shastra says: "When they practice giving and the other perfections, they do so at the profound level without hesitation. In their personal lives they cultivate compassionate action, and do not stay under the five coverings."

People who cultivate practice must test themselves in terms of benefiting self and benefiting others. All virtuous practices arise from the myriad practices of the six perfections: giving charity, upholding discipline, forbearance toward mistreatment, energetic progress, meditative concentration, and transcendent wisdom. In reality, any one of these is very difficult to accomplish: none of them are that simple. If you have ten dollars, to give away two dollars is easy. What's hard is to give away a dollar and a half when you only have one dollar. The Buddhist scriptures say: "For the rich and noble, it is hard to develop the aspiration for enlightenment. For the poor and destitute, it is hard to give charity." Nevertheless, most of the people who really give charity are poor, because in this world it is only the poor who are comparatively sympathetic to the poor. If you are not poor yourself, you cannot understand the sufferings of the poor. Thus, the heart of the true bodhisattva is here in this kind of place.

Practicing giving and the other perfections is very hard. The reason for this is very deep: this is not just a convenient ordinary way of talking. When you see what is right, then you must be brave and do it: do it without any hesitation. You must cultivate the most compassionate behavior. To learn Buddhism, the basis is to learn compassion, but no one really performs compassionate actions. To transform of the mental state is very difficult, to say nothing of behavior. If this merit is not complete, you will not be able to see empty true nature thoroughly. This, too, is an invariable principle.

The shastra says that bodhisattvas "do not stay under the five coverings." The five great coverings are greed, anger, ignorance, arrogance, and doubt. People who genuinely cultivate practice definitely cannot coexist with the five coverings. If you are a buddha, you are not a demon; if you are a demon, you are not a buddha. The two are mutually exclusive.

The shastra says: "They subdue all soporific factors, and are equipped with correct mindfulness and correct knowledge. Their clothing is always clean, and their bodies are free of insects." Soporific afflictions follow you, and tie you up, and make you dull and muddled all day long, as if you were asleep. You must conquer all such mental afflictions. The functions of the fifty-one mental states are numerous, and you must conquer them one by one.

In all parts of your daily life, such as food, clothing, housing, and conduct, you must pay attention to hygiene. The bodhisattvas all dress immaculately, and except for ascetics, bodhisattvas who are householders all maintain a dignified physical appearance.

The shastra says: "Their minds are free from deceit, and abstemious, and they are free from stinginess and greed. They perfect the practices of the real nature of phenomena, and benefit others even unto hell."

In the minds of bodhisattvas there is no crookedness or deceit, and they must practice asceticism. They also must have the intention of benefiting others. They are like the Bodhisattva Ti-tsang [Kshitigarbha] who sacrificed himself and concentrated on benefiting others. He dared to go to hell to save the beings there, and he preferred not to become a buddha until all the beings in hell were completely saved. You must have this spirit before you can study Buddhism.

The shastra says: "They cannot be led astray by others. When delusive demons make semblances of the Path appear, they know that these are delusions. All the buddhas take delight in their practice."

The Yogacarabhumi Shastra speaks of forty-six realms of delusion. It really has a way to deal with us! Demons certainly cannot delude people: it is we who delude ourselves. Recently I composed a verse:

> With a single lamp in the room, I'm thinking of
> previous times of peace
> In a dream I accompany sentient beings across
> rivers and mountains
> Eighty-thousand *nagas* and *devas* all asking how we are
> A universe of forms gives forth an empty sound
> Wanting to strengthen my power in the Path
> I rely on the power of delusion
> I laugh at myself: I flee from fame but instead
> I get closer to fame
> I leave my position for no reason, and cannot return
> I raise my head [and see] the bright moon at midnight.

If you really want to examine your own power in the Path, you must rely on the power of delusion. Thus the Bodhisattva Maitreya also says: "Delusive demons make semblances of the Path appear." The real path of delusion is very terrible: it looks almost exactly like the Correct Path of the Buddha Dharma. Often times the false seems more real than the real, so often the path of delusion and the Buddhist Path are very hard to tell apart. For this we must rely on wisdom.

The shastra says: "[By knowing] the characteristics of these twenty [paths of delusion], the multitude [of bodhisattvas] who abide in warming, the peak, forbearance, and the supreme worldly dharma, do not retreat from great enlightenment."

Only when you clearly understand these twenty different kinds of roads of delusion can you begin to sit in meditation and cultivate practice. Only then can you abide peacefully in warming, the peak, forbearance, and the supreme worldly dharma. When you progress further, and you have perfected your cultivation of the four intensified practices, then at last you can reach the realm where there is no falling back, the realm of great penetrating enlightenment, and experience great *bodhi*.

In the next passage, the shastra is still doing everything possible to differentiate between realms of delusion and delusory knowledge and the wisdom of the Path:

> Here there are four kinds of delusive demons. The delusive demon of the five *skandhas* means the five forms of grasping the *skandhas*. The delusive demon of affliction means all the afflictions in the three realms. The delusive demon of death means not being the master and so having one's life cut off. The *deva* delusive demons mean the multitude of sovereign *devas* with the power to take on other forms who obstruct the cultivation of virtue.

According to the shastra, there are four kinds of realms of delusion. The first kind, the delusions of our own bodies, are the most terrible. These are the "delusions of the five *skandhas*" that come along with our lives—form, sensation, conception, synthesis, and consciousness. Today you catch cold, tomorrow you develop a fever, here it hurts, there it itches: this is the delusive demon of the *skandha* of form obstructing you all the time. If the *skandha* of form is not transformed, if you do not feel comfortable, this is a realm of delusion. The delusive demons of the five *skandhas* are the five forms of grasping the *skandhas*.

What are the five forms of grasping? This is the grasping that is one of the twelve *nidanas*, the twelve links of interdependent causation. It is you holding onto yourself. We have this life, and we hold onto this body with all our might. The basic reason is the view that the self is real and the view that the body is a permanent possession. Both demand that we live forever. The five forms of grasping the *skandhas* are a delusion.

The second form is "the delusive demon of affliction." All our mental states, all our psychological attitudes and thoughts are all delusions.

The third is the one that is most feared: "the delusive demon of death." It is always threatening you. When it demands your life, you will die then and there. How many of the people who study Buddhism can get free of birth, old age, sickness, and death? What's the reason for this? There is an important question here. To leap beyond birth and death, and come and go as you please and be absolutely able to act the master: only a person with enlightenment and with meditative accomplishment can do this. For example, when the disciples of Zen master Ts'ao-shan wanted him to postpone his death and stay a few more days, he did so. The Ming dynasty Confucian Lo Chin-ch'i also did this. Both of them had broken the power of the delusive demon of death. Thus the shastra describes the delusive demon of death as "not being the master and so having one's life cut off." If you cannot be the master, then whenever death comes, whenever that function arrives, you must go immediately. When you are able to be the master, you begin to understand that our fates do not depend on heaven. This is not a boast. But to accomplish this it takes the power of *samadhi* and meditative accomplishments. Only then is this life of ours really not under the control of the delusive demon of death.

The fourth category of delusion is called "the *deva* delusive demons." These are things that come from outside and obstruct your cultivation of virtuous practices. The present world is all a world of realms of delusion. In other words, befuddled and confused by material culture, it is also a realm of delusion. It is all the transformations done by the *deva* delusive demons, sovereign *devas* with the power to take on other forms.

These realms of delusion are even simpler to understand if we express them in a saying of the Zen School: "Giving rise to mind and setting thoughts in motion is the *deva* delusive demon. Not giving rise to mind or setting thoughts in motion is the delusive demon of the *skandhas*. Giving rise [to mind] and yet not giving rise [to mind] is the delusive demon of affliction." If you cannot act the master, any thought whatsoever is a *deva* delusive demon. If your mind is sunk in oblivion all day long, this is the delusive demon of the *skandhas*.

The shastra says: "Because these can obstruct undying nirvana, they are called delusive demons." What the Buddha Dharma calls delusive demons are all the realms of experience that can block you from realizing the Path of nirvana.

The shastra says: "When followers of the Hinayana realize the stage of seeing the Path, they realize faith in what they have attained from the Three Jewels, and they conquer the coarser portion of the *deva* demons of delusion."

Pay attention to this. When you cultivate practice and sit in meditation, when you do the work of the four intensified practices, you must realize the stage of seeing the Path that is the fruit of Hinayana. A person who is mindful of emptiness, whose thoughts have really reached emptiness, experiences faith in what he has attained from the Three Jewels, and truly sees real emptiness. With this Hinayana fruit of one-sided emptiness, you can conquer the coarser portion of the *deva* demons of delusion. You do not necessarily have to realize the realm of the arhats before you can conquer the *deva* demons of delusion. All you need is that your thoughts be empty, and be stabilized. When you realize this state, then you can subdue the *deva* demons of delusion.

The shastra says: "When they attain nirvana with remaining dependency, they cut off all afflictions forever, and thus they conquer the delusive demons of affliction."

When you attain nirvana with remaining dependency, your body and mind are both empty, and you are totally pure. Even though this is nirvana with remaining dependency, and the root of the *alaya* consciousness has not yet been cut off, you can still conquer all the

delusive demons of affliction. When all false thoughts are no longer functioning, this means that the delusive demons of affliction have been cut off.

The shastra says: "Arhats who have realized full liberation can prolong their life span, and attain sovereign mastery, so they conquer the delusive demon of death."

The Taoists are always talking about eternal life without aging. Is there such a thing or not? As soon as people who study Buddhism hear such talk they dismiss it as an outside path. Careless criticism! The Buddhist scriptures themselves tell you that such a thing exists. When you realize the fruit of the great arhats, you, yourself, can be the master of your life span. For example, in the Buddhist scriptures they use the phrase "keeping one's physical form to dwell in the world." Buddha ordered his four great disciples Kashyapa, Rahula, Pindola, and Kundupada to receive the Buddha's prediction of enlightenment and keep their physical forms and dwell in the world without dying until the next era when Maitreya Buddha comes.

There is a method by which one can invite the Venerable Pindola to come. This kind of thing often occurred in the past in the Zen communities on Mount P'u-t'o, Mount Chiu-hua, and Mount O-mei. Wealthy patrons would come to hold a feast for a thousand monks, and provide funds so that a thousand monks could eat a vegetarian meal, and also give each of them one silver dollar. When the monks heard such a feast was to be held, they would hasten there from far and wide to eat a good vegetarian meal and get a gift. At these times, our elder brother and teacher Pindola might come. When he came, no one knew it. But after he had gone he might tell you, to prove that the Buddha Dharma is real. But he only let you know it after he had gone.

All you have to do is cultivate practice properly, and realize liberation, the fruit of the arhats. Then you will be able to prolong your life span. When you want to die, you go; when you don't want to go, then you stay. You have conquered the delusive demon of death. This delusive demon is the most difficult to conquer which is really not easy to do. You can only do it when you have attained the fruit of the arhats.

So everyone asks me, "What is the achievement of the *sambhogakaya*?" When you manage to conquer the delusive demon of death, then of course you have achieved the *samabhogakaya*. Only when you have done this can you eliminate sicknesses and prolong life. Then you will be able to get rid of any disease whatsoever.

The shastra says: "When they realize nirvana without remaining dependent, they totally eliminate the confusions, and defilements, and the clinging to the *skandhas* of the karma of delusion, and they conquer the coarser portion of the delusive demons of the five *skandhas*."

In other words, when you reach nirvana without remaining dependency, you have conquered the coarser portion of the delusive demons of the five *skandhas*.

What we have just introduced is the progression of the cultivation of realization in Hinayana. Now let's take a look at the situation in Mahayana.

The shastra says: "When followers of the Mahayana realize the attribute of not regressing, they realize faith in what they have attained from the Three Jewels, and they conquer the coarser portion of the *deva* demons of delusion."

When you reach the stage where there is no regression, when you attain the wisdom of true emptiness giving birth to wondrous being, the wisdom from which you do not regress, then you can conquer the coarser portion of the *deva* delusive demons.

The shastra says: "When they attain the eighth stage of bodhisattvas, they have already attained mastery of nondiscriminating wisdom, they conquer the coarser portions of the other three kinds of delusion." When you keep cultivating until you reach the eighth stage of bodhisattvas, you attain nondiscriminating wisdom. Only then can you subdue the coarser portion of the other three realms of delusion.

The shastra says: "As for the subtle forms of the four kinds of delusion, the subtle form of the delusive demon of the *skandhas* refers to the body generated by will created by the stage of habit-energy based on ignorance and created by stainless karma." Having reached the Mahayana realm, besides conquering the coarser forms of the four realms of delusion, it is also necessary for you to pay close attention and check up on yourself, and subdue the subtle forms of the realms of delusion.

What are the subtle realms of delusion? After we have attained the Path, and in concert with this we have produced the body generated by will, the beginningless root of the habit-energy of ignorance in our thoughts and lives can send forth the *yang* spirit and the *yin* spirit. If the *yang* spirit and the *yin* spirit are not produced after great penetrating enlightenment, if they are accompanied by desires and hopes, if they are born from a mentality of seeking, then this body generated by will is the subtle form of the delusive demon of the *skandhas*.

The realms of delusion on the Path of the Mahayana bodhisattvas are so subtle that you cannot distinguish them. Of course in your cultivation of practice none of you have reached this realm. You cannot understand the real body generated by will: this is a result of the *bodhi* path, of the achievement of all three buddha-bodies, *dharmakaya*, *sambhoghakaya*, and *nirmanakaya*. The important point in this passage from the shastra is "the body generated by will created by the stage of habit-energy based on ignorance and created by stainless karma." This body generated by will is the subtle form of the demons of delusion of the five *skandhas*. In other words, it too comes from the view that the self is real and from egocentric clingings. If a person cannot relinquish himself, if he cannot empty out, he will always be clinging to this body of illusory transformation.

The shastra says: "The stage of the habit energy of ignorance is the subtle form of the delusive demon of affliction."

People themselves do not even know about their fundamental ignorance. As long as the final category, the habit energy of ignorance, is still present, then subtle forms of affliction are there. Say what you please about sudden enlightenment and seeing that mountains are not mountains and rivers are not rivers. In terms of the principles of the teaching, this is precisely the delusive demon of afflictions caused by the habit energy of ignorance. Pay attention to this. This is why it is said: "If you understand a sub-school of Buddhism without understanding the total teaching, when you open your mouth you will speak confusion."

Seeing that mountains are not mountains and rivers are not rivers—I won't say that you cannot do this, but even if you can, do you still see it? If you say you do not see, then you are sunk in oblivion: this is the delusive demon of affliction. If you say you see it, you already have a view. If you say you are not either way, then what are you? Please say something about the one road of transcendence. If you cannot speak, I'll push you back under the water—this was Zen master Ch'eng the Boatman's teaching method.

Thus the great Zen masters of the past understood the Zen School, and also certainly understood the principles of the teaching as a whole. When they checked up on themselves, they went very deep. If you understand the Zen school and have awakened, then having awakened, you will understand that in the realm of buddhahood there is omniscience. If there is still anything you do not know, then this does not count as enlightenment. The Confucians said it all: "If there is one thing they do not know, Confucians are ashamed." How much the more so in the study of Buddhism, the world-transcending Dharma!

The shastra says: "The birth and death of inconceivable transformation is the subtle form of the delusive demon of death." We just said that only the great arhats can completely escape from birth and death, and smash the delusive demon of death. What is the delusive demon of death? Even if you live for five hundred years or a thousand years, you still have not smashed the delusive demon of death, you are still within the birth and death of transformation. All you have done is extended portioned out birth and death: you are still subject to what accompanies the birth and death of transformation, so this belongs in the category of the subtle form of the delusive demon of death.

Pay attention to the word "subtle." This means that you yourself do not know it, and cannot find it by investigating. If you could investigate and discover this one, then your *prajna* wisdom would be complete. "Buddha" means "awakened." It means being able to awaken oneself and awaken others. It is only enlightenment when the practices of enlightenment are complete and perfect. Awakening yourself is not at all easy. You must be able to know when the least bit of affliction or the like is occurring in your mind.

The shastra says: "Anything that can block them when they want to go beyond these three forms of delusion is the subtle form of the *deva* delusive demon."

In the process of cultivating practice, the subtle form of the *deva* delusive demon is anything that can render us unable to leap beyond these three kinds of delusion, the delusive demon of the five *skandhas*, the delusive demon of affliction, and the delusive demon of death. For example, if you say that the changes of our times are obstructing you so that you cannot cultivate practice, this belongs in the category of the influences of the *deva* demons of delusion. When the environment which you have created around yourself blocks your cultivation of the Path, this, too, is related to the *deva* demons of delusion. These circumstances imperceptibly pull you away from cultivating the Path.

The shastra says: "Conquering the subtle forms of the four delusions is the merit of the *dharmakaya*. Thus conquering the subtle forms of the four delusions is simultaneous with becoming buddha." To this point you should pay special attention. Conquering the four

extremely subtle kinds of delusion that exist within you depends on the merit of the *dharmakaya*. You can completely conquer the four subtle forms of delusion only at the same time as you achieve buddhahood.

Speaking of this, I want to ask all of you a question. What is the situation that the Zen School calls smashing the three barriers in great penetrating enlightenment? If you have not studied the Buddhist scriptures, you must not talk as you please about enlightenment, thinking that you know the answer. Genuine enlightenment is the same as the situation being talked about here.

The Abhisamayalamkara Shastra, volume 4, part two of chapter six, "On Immediate Awareness at the Peak," says:

> The Mahayana immediate awareness that follows cultivating with the appropriate means the categories of the active abilities of the seeds that have been cut off is the characteristic of the intensified practice of "the peak" in cultivating the Path. Its boundaries are in cultivating the Path only. This means that bodhisattvas who cultivate the Path enter transcendent practices via the two gates of the intensified practice and fundamental [wisdom]. This means the sequence of *samadhis* including the *samadhi* of total extinction and so on.

This is the Mahayana method of cultivating *samadhi*: "First cultivate as an intensified practice the *samadhi* of the lion pouncing, with its two characteristics: the practice of moving along ever upward [toward transcendence], and the practice that turns back down [toward sentient beings in the realm of delusion]."

The practice of moving along means moving from the state of an ordinary person and reaching the level of the *shravakas* and *pratyekas*. It means to move ever upward, moving from the human plane to cultivate the heavenly plane of the *devas*; moving from the plane of the *devas* to cultivate the path of the *shravakas*; moving from cultivating the path of the *shravakas* to cultivating the path of the *pratyekas* and the path of the bodhisattvas.

What is the *samadhi* of the lion pouncing? When a lion wants to eat another animal, it rears back and pounces with a great burst of power, with the quickest motion. This describes achieving the Path in sudden enlightenment. The *samadhi* of the lion pouncing is the Mahayana road of sudden enlightenment.

The shastra says: "When they cultivate the fundamental [wisdom], they proceed from the first stilling of thoughts straight on through to the *samadhi* of total extinction." When cultivating the fundamental, we begin from the first *dhyana*. We cannot be lacking in any part of the complete sequence of the four *dhyanas* and the eight *samadhis*. We must cultivate them all successfully, until we arrive at the *samadhi* of total extinction.

The shastra says: "There is no such thing as skipping over any stage of practice." In this process of cultivating the Mahayana Path, we proceed from the first *dhyana* through the four *dhyanas* and eight *samadhis*, and finally we cultivate the *samadhi* of total extinction. There is sudden awakening to truth, but meditation work must be gradually cultivated in a step-by-step way that does not skip over any stage of practice, in a genuine and orderly fashion. If you say you are enlightened, but in the end you have not completed your meditation work, who are you fooling? Can you deceive heaven?

The shastra says: "Next they cultivate the interpenetration of the eight *samadhis* and the *samadhi* of total extinction. This means they can arise from the *samadhi* of total extinction and enter the first *dhyana*, and then arise from the first *dhyana* and reenter the *samadhi* of total extinction."

Next, the people who have already succeeded in their cultivation, after seeing the Path, cultivate the Path. After you have arrived through your meditation work in the four *dhyanas* and eight *samadhis*, you play at will in the nine stages of *samadhi* meditation. As soon as you sit cross-legged, you immediately enter the *samadhi* of total extinction, and a moment later you enter the realm of the first *dhyana*. The last part of this passage tells us that having perfected the cultivation of the Path, we may play as we please.

The Lankavatara Sutra also says this. After they have awakened to the Path, Mahayana bodhisattvas cultivate the Path. After they have arrived, the tenth stage bodhisattvas sometimes go to the realm of the first stage bodhisattvas and play at will there.

From this we can understand one thing. In the scriptures it says that when Buddha entered *samadhi*, he was aware of everything. All forms and all sounds at all times in all the worlds in the universe he saw clearly, as if looking at a fruit in the palm of his hands: Buddha was aware of them all.

But what about this story? Buddha was sitting in meditation on the banks of the Ganges River and a great procession of chariots

passed by, making so much noise that his disciples could not keep meditating. But through it all Buddha was sitting there in *samadhi*. When Buddha emerged from *samadhi*, and opened his eyes and looked: "What's this? Why is there all this mud and all these hoof prints?" Was Buddha in a state of oblivious *samadhi* or not? When a person enters the first *dhyana*, he or she can hear even the sounds made by ants. So how could Buddha not have heard all the commotion made by the horses passing by? What does this mean? Since it was Buddha, it was not oblivion, and it was not ignorance, though in an ordinary person it definitely would have been oblivion and ignorance.

If you have awakened to the Path, you can choose at will among the nine stages of *samadhi*, from the first *dhyana* on up: you have attained sovereignty over them all. If you have not yet seen the Path, if you have not yet perfected your cultivation of the Path, then even if you enter *samadhi*, you cannot be the master. In that case your meditative accomplishments are all called false thinking creating karma.

11

THE FIVE *SKANDHAS*

Up to this point in this course of lectures about the cultivation of realization accommodating both the exoteric and esoteric schools of Buddhism, we are still searching out and investigating source materials. We have still not completed our investigation. However, virtually every one of the source materials we've cited is very important. There is no way to discuss them all in detail; the most important thing to bear in mind is the three guiding principles—seeing truth, cultivating realization, and carrying out vows.

You have had a bit of an introduction to seeing truth, and a partial introduction to the work of cultivating realization. Now we will set forth the work of carrying out vows.

If all of you make a study of the reference works we have discussed so far, they will be sufficient for a lifetime of cultivating practice and doing meditation work, and they can also be said to be ample provisions for becoming a buddha. If you are unable to make such a study, if you just look at the source materials mentioned in this lecture, even though they are no more than a few fragments of the whole of the Buddhist teachings, they will still be useful enough.

At the very outset, we brought out the fact that the aspect of seeing truth is extremely important in cultivating the path. In this respect it is good, regardless of whether the world's people study Buddhism or Taoism, or the exoteric or esoteric teachings of Buddhism, or yogic arts, or any of the other myriad kinds of enlightening teachings. They all have a common aim for they all require that a person move beyond apparent reality, and transcend the world of this apparent reality, and seek a destination and a result above form that transcends the material world. For this, many methods and many theories have been produced. But among all these methods and theories, which are high and which are low, which are correct and which are misguided? To know, we must first understand one basic principle. It is that in all these methods, all these forms of the work of cultivating realization, the most important factor is seeing truth. Seeing truth is the achievement of wisdom.

In terms of modern day civilization, people who study science must first be clear in their theoretical learning. If they go wrong in theory, then the research they undertake subsequently will also go wrong. In cultivation, the similar principle is to see truth, to see the Path.

The term *chien-ti*, translated here as "seeing truth," is a concept from Chinese Buddhism. The Zen School came up with the concrete term "being equipped with vision of the truth," that is, being fully prepared with a perception of the truth. A person must be equipped with a lofty vision of the truth, not only in studying Buddhism and cultivating the Path, but also in relation to worldly phenomena. When we do things, we must first have a far-reaching insight and perception. If the level of perception and understanding is not high, everything will be low. If you start from the work of cultivating realization without seeing truth, you cannot be lofty: seeing truth is very important.

In the traditional Confucian Chinese culture, the faculty for seeing truth is called "capacity and knowledge." A Confucian gentleman values capacity and knowledge: without them, there is no seeing truth. No matter how hard you try, if you do not have a perception of truth, then you cannot accomplish anything very lofty. This is even more true for studying Buddhism.

The world's people are all very comical. Everyone wants to study some kind of method and achieve something that transcends apparent reality. But what are the results? If we make a careful study of our human psychology, we discover that nobody is willing to study [how to] see truth. In other words, people like paying homage to one teacher here, and another teacher there. They like looking for secrets and meditation methods, as if when they find a secret, they will be immediately able to use it to leap to freedom. But no such thing exists: it is absolutely impossible. This is especially true in studying Buddhism. Success in learning great *prajna*, in learning great wisdom, is not like learning a skill. You can do meditation work in hundreds and thousands of patterns, and even if you get some results, you will certainly not be able to achieve transcendence. In fact, many people study with this attitude, but actually they are going against the Path in their seeking. Thus it is important to bring up the matter of seeing truth as we are about to bring this course of lectures to a conclusion.

As for the aspect of seeing truth, you should consult as study material *The Collected Essays on the Hua-yen Sutra* by Elder Li. Why

do I use Elder Li's *Collected Essays* to explain *The Hua-yen Sutra*? As for *The Hua-yen Sutra*, altogether there are four works relating to its own teachings on seeing truth, cultivating realization, and carrying out vows. These are: *The Hua-yen Sutra* itself, National Teacher Ch'ing-liang's T'ang period commentary on the sutra, Zen master Fo-kuo's fifty-three eulogies on *The Hua-yen Sutra* from a later ear, and *The Collected Essays on the Hua-yen Sutra* by Elder Li. These are the four greatest works of the Hua-yen School.

Elder Li's Dharma-name was Li T'ung-hsuan [T'ung-shuan means "Comprehends Mysteries"]. His original name is not known, but it is possible that he was a descendent of one of the emperors of the late T'ang period. He discarded his original name and did not use it. He was reared in an extremely wealthy and high-ranking family, and received a very high-level education. Later on he made up his mind to go cultivate the Path.

When Li came to Mount Shen, a tiger appeared in his path. If it had been us, we would have already been scared to death, but Li was not afraid. He said to the tiger: "Have you come to receive me or not? If you have, then crouch down and let me mount you." Sure enough, the tiger crouched down very obediently and let Li T'ung-hsuan mount him. After that the tiger carried Li to a cave on Mount Shen. Li lived in this cave while he wrote his *Collected Essays on the Hua-yen Sutra*. Every evening, a female deva brought him food, and lit a lamp for him, so he could work day and night writing this book. After he had completed the book, the female deva's duty was ended, and she did not come anymore. Li T'ung-hsuan then came down from the mountain. This is the source of *The Collected Essays on the Hua-yen Sutra*.

From then on, all the various schools of Buddhism all drew on the words of *The Collected Essays* for their theories of seeing truth. Besides his principal focus on *The Hua-yen Sutra*, Li also introduced the important points from *The Great Prajna Sutra*, *The Lotus Sutra*, *The Vimalakirti Sutra*, *The Lankavatara Sutra*, *The Nirvana Sutra*, and *The Hinayana* codes of discipline, and other sources, and made an overall criticism of them. In the Chinese Buddhism of the past, this was termed "classifying and analyzing the teachings." Li T'ung-hsuan did a critical analysis of the whole system of Buddhism.

For this kind of criticism, before Elder Li, there was the classification and analysis of the teachings by the great teacher Chih-i of the T'ien-t'ai School and the classification and analysis of the teachings

by the T'ang period National Teacher Ch'eng-kuan. Classifying the teachings meant making a scientific arrangement and categorizing the Buddhist teachings. Analyzing the teachings meant making an objective selection and evaluation. An insider can see at a glance that the views of Buddhism expounded by many of the present-day Japanese scholars are nothing more than modernized versions of the T'ien-t'ai and Hua-yen Schools' classification and analysis of the teachings, with a bit of textual criticism added on. These are the modern day so-called scholars.

Buddhism cam to China, and had developed up through the late T'ang period, when a great personage like Elder Li appeared. He was very respectful toward Buddhism, as people had been before, but his learning was very objective. He carried out his work of criticism and categorization without standing on ceremony.

In *The Collected Essays* there is the following statement: "In infinite numbers of lands, we are not separated from them by a hairsbreadth. The ten time frames of past and present have never moved from the current moment."

This is one of Elder Li's famous sayings. He says that a person who has realized the Path is not obstructed by space. As examples of lands: the world of ultimate bliss in the west is the land of Amitabha Buddha, the world of ours called Saha is the land of Shakyamuni Buddha, and the crystalline world in the east is the land of the Medicine King Tathagata. The same word *ch'a* sometimes means the realm of a buddha, and sometimes a land or country. "We" means we ourselves. "Them" means the Medicine King Tathagata, Amitabha Buddha, and all the other buddhas of past, present, and future in all the worlds of the ten directions. Is there any other buddha-realm in existence? There is: it is right here in you. We are not separated from them: there is no barrier between us. That is to say, based on Buddhism, Elder Li puts forward the concept that space is relative. Space has no barriers, no set directions, no large or small, no coming or going. These principles are all part of seeing truth.

Dharma master Seng-chao said this: "My arriving in Yueh now is like my arriving in the past." He was saying that there are no barriers of time or space. Nevertheless, when we sit in meditation and study Buddhism and cultivate the Path, we are not at all clear about the concepts of time and space. The reason why we sit in meditation without making progress is that we are attached to our concepts of time and space. Some people are attached to the idea

that the time to meditate is midnight, or noon, or five to seven in the morning, or five to seven in the afternoon. Some people are sure they must face the east when they meditate. I've heard that in America some people teach students to get up early and sit in meditation facing the rising sun in the east. All such views show a failure to see truth. There are also people who think that their meditation is not correct if they are not facing an image of buddha. You must abandon your attachments to such concepts. You must realize that, "In infinite numbers of lands, we are not separated from them by a hairsbreadth."

Time is also relative, not absolute. "The ten time frames of past and present have never moved from the current moment." There is no past, present, or future. There are two reasons why every Buddhist scripture is written in the following manner: "At one time, Buddha was in such-and-such a place. . ." One reason is Indian custom: the Indians did not like to specify the time with numbers. When the Indians spoke of numbers, then they were usually symbolic figures like eighty-four thousand; thus in the Buddhist scriptures, the number eighty-four thousand occurs very frequently, to describe a large number. This is looking at Buddhism from a theoretical point of view. If we look at the Buddhist scriptures from the point of view of cultivating the Path, their customary use of the phrase "at one time" is very brilliant. Ten thousand ages are just one time. "The ten time frames of past and present have never moved from the current moment." A million, million years ago is still right now; a million, million years into the future it will still be right now. There is only this one, there is no other. The sutras' use of this expression "at one time" is extremely wondrous and subtle.

Therefore, if we do not abandon our concepts of time and space, there's no use talking about cultivating the Path. If we do not clearly comprehend time and space, there is no point talking about cultivating the Path.

When we study Buddhism, we must first completely abandon the conscious concepts of time and space which we have built up over several decades, and return to the state we were in as infants. But can you do this? It's very simple! In the Buddhist scriptures we read of all sorts of theories about having no thought and not arousing discriminating intellect. In the terms of Lao-tzu: "Concentrate your vital energy and make it supple, and you can become like an infant." When we sit and do meditation work, this is the way we must do it.

There are many many questions about the origin of humankind and the phenomena of human life. How can we resolve them all? Buddha tells us that our present lives are a third-level reflection of our original lives. As for our original true life, in philosophical terms it is called true thusness, and in logical, scientific terms it is called the supreme truth, the absolute truth. In religious terms it is called the Tathagata, the Buddha. In terms of its educational role as a teacher, it is called the World-Honored One. Later in China this concept was translated with the term "original nature." This thing is fundamentally pure and perfectly illuminated, fundamentally neither born nor destroyed, fundamentally without afflictions. It does not have the phases of formation, abiding, destruction, and emptiness. It is free from birth, old age, sickness, and death. But is it really non-existent? Is it completely non-existent? It is not. It is able to give rise to all the myriad forms of existence. So-called non-existence is the original purity, and therefore we sometimes say that this absolute truth, our real life is non-existent. But it can give rise to the myriad forms of existence, so it exists.

In volume 4 of *The Surangama Sutra*, Buddha's disciple, the venerable Purna, asks Buddha: "Since the inherent nature of our life is fundamentally pure, why does the first mental-moment of ignorance arise? Why is this world produced?"

In fact, life in this world is anything but subtle. Because this world has been created, people contend with each other and revile each other and hate each other all day long, and make everything into a big mass of confusion. Discussing this is the key point in volume 4 of *The Surangama Sutra*. In Buddha's reply he said something that is connected to both seeing truth and carrying out vows. He said: "Awakening and illumination create faults." This statement is very much worth paying careful attention to. When we study Buddhism we seek enlightenment, we seek awakening. When we are enlightened to the Path, that enlightenment is an awakening. But that awakening is also a great problem.

When we sit in meditation, aren't we seeking emptiness? You must take note: based on this saying in *The Surangama Sutra*, if you attain purity, then purity is a sickness. You may say: "When I sit in meditation, originally it is very pure, so how is it that later it is not pure and not empty?" Because it is empty, it is not empty! The reason for this is very simple, but it is also a profound secret. After you have made a thorough study of all the Buddhist scriptures, take a look:

how does this original life become transformed into this world that appears before us? How does it become transformed into this human life? "Awakening and illumination create faults." This saying alone gives the clearest answer to these questions.

Thus all the religions and all the philosophies in the world commit a major mistake in their view of human life. They all take a pessimistic view of human life. They view this world as defective, as incomplete. Buddhism is also like this. There are only two Buddhist scriptures that are exceptions. One is *The Hua-yen Sutra*. It sees this world as always perfectly real and perfectly good and perfectly beautiful, without any defects, without any sorrow. The other is *The Nirvana Sutra*, which recognizes that this world is without any defects, and without any sorrow, and is eternal , blissful, personal, and pure, and exists forever.

First we will clarify the principles in these scriptures, and gradually as we proceed toward the conclusion of these lectures, we will talk more about the work of cultivating realization.

Today as we sit in meditation, cultivating and nurturing the real nature of mind, we must be able to return to the condition of infants, and then we will surely succeed. It doesn't have to be an infant: 4- and 5-year-old children are lovable, too. When they want to cry, they cry, and when they want to make noise, they make noise. They may be crying, but if you coax them to smile, they immediately smile, and then they go back to crying again. They are guileless and naive. We cannot be like them: we have too much falsity. Someone may obviously hate you, but they want to put on a false facade, so they are all smiles on the outside but not on the inside. How criminal such behavior is!

This is connected to carrying out vows. A Buddhist sutra says: "A straightforward mind is the site of enlightenment." We cannot be straightforward. How much falsity there is in us! We are playing false every minute and every second. Even the thoughts in our inner minds are false. We are always creating evil karma. So how can we talk of carrying out vows? We cannot manage to carry out our vows. If we could carry out our vows, then we would become buddhas immediately.

Observe that infants have no knowledge, and no discriminating minds. This situation is the fundamental level of the functioning of conceptual consciousness. For example, our false thought of seeking emptiness is also the basis of conceptual consciousness. So when we

sit in meditation and work at eliminating false thoughts, we are always exerting ourselves wrongly. Did you know that? If you do your utmost, wanting to repress thinking, to empty it out and stop it, and you call this eliminating false thoughts, this is totally wrong. Thus if you proceed like this, you can work hard for several decades, and it will still all be in vain. The true root of false thought is still there. Even if we sit there and know that our own meditation work is being done very well, and we are very pure, this in itself is false thought. That verges on the experiential realm of an infant, but it is still false thought.

In Chinese culture, there is something called *ch'ing* "sentiments" or "feelings." In *The Book of Rites*, Confucius made the distinction between *hsing* "true nature" and *ch'ing* "sentiments." The beginning of the first section of *The Book of Rites* is concerned with cultivating the Path: "Always be reverent, be serious and be mindful." This is Chinese culture: concentration and wisdom are both there in it and so is religion. Human life should be conducted at all times with a serious, diligent, respectful and reverent attitude, to accomplish cultivation that is neither sunk in oblivion nor scattered in confusion. In this quotation from *The Book of Rites*, the word *ssu* ("mindful") is not the *ssu* of *ssu-liang* ("thinking"). It is the equivalent of what the Buddha Dharma speaks of as being pure and illuminated, without being scattered and without being oblivious .This is precisely the basis of proper conduct.

Thus it is said: "The East has its sages, and the West has its sages, but this mind and this truth are the same." This was all transmitted down from antiquity, and has the same source.

"True nature" is the basic nature of human beings. In it there is no distinction between primordial and temporal, or good and evil. For example, some people are born to be talkative, and some people are taciturn: how is it that they bring along these innate tendencies? Chinese culture tells us that they have them because, "What Heaven endows a person with is his nature."

The second item is "sentiments." Here there is a question: why does the Confucian classic *The Doctrine of the Mean* only mention four kinds of sentiments—happiness, anger, sorrow, and joy? Basically in the traditional Chinese reckoning there are seven sentiments [happiness, anger, sorrow, fear, love, hate, desire] and six desires, so why does this classic only speak of four sentiments? Moreover, *The Doctrine of the Mean* says: "The state before happiness, anger, sorrow, and joy come forth is called balance. If they all are in the proper proportion

when they do come forth, this is called harmony." It also says: "Exercise balance and harmony, and thereby heaven and earth will be in their proper positions, and all the myriad things will be nourished." Why does it only speak of four kinds of sentiments? Happiness, anger, sorrow, and joy are sentiments, not true nature. Sentiments are brought along by the seeds in the *alaya* consciousness. Some people have a natural temperament that is happy, some people have a natural temperament that is angry, some have a natural temperament that is sorrowful or joyful.

What are sentiments based on? They are connected with states of mind, with the four elements of the physical body, with the five forces [of earth, water, fire, wood, and metal], with the physiological endowment of the heart and liver and spleen and lungs and kidneys. You all sit in meditation without understanding this clearly. You think that emptying out the thoughts of the sixth consciousness is it, but this has nothing to do with it. The thoughts of the sixth consciousness are not false thought itself, but just floating thoughts on top of false thought. They are easy to get rid of: to empty out thoughts is easy.

You have this feeling: I am still sitting here, my eyes are shut, inside I am pure and clean. This is just what *The Surangama Sutra* was talking about: "When you hold on to a peaceful and empty feeling within, this is still a shadow of discriminating thought, the dust of the Dharma." When all of you do the work of sitting meditation, which of you is not holding onto a peaceful and empty feeling within? If not this, then it is the fault of the later generations of the Ts'ao-Tung School study of Zen which the Sung Dynasty Zen master Ta-hui called "the misguided Zen of silent illumination." When studying the Buddhist Path and doing meditation work, which one of you is not guilty of this? If we do not get rid of these sentiments, we are still filled with happiness, anger, sorrow, and joy.

Buddha said that sentiments are a type of karmic power, the root of karma. Later the Neo-Confucians spoke of the material-energy nature of humans. If you do not transform your material-energy nature, how can you consummate the Path? Thus you must first be sure to recognize all these sentiments clearly. All of you must first check this out: When you are sitting there cross-legged, what are you doing? Most people are just playing with their own psychological states. This has nothing at all to do with cultivating the Path, but so many people keep on playing here for decades. So if we cannot examine ourselves, we think that we are being good people, and

doing good things, and cultivating our moral nature, but in reality all we are doing is playing with ourselves within our nature and sentiments. So what should we do? The first step is to recognize what false thoughts are.

That saying in volume 4 of *The Surangama Sutra*, "Awakening and illumination create faults," is a false thought. A single false thought includes the five *skandhas*, the eight consciousnesses, and the eighty-eight bonds and compulsions. So all of you should be careful not to think that when you are sitting cross-legged and you happen to set aside your thoughts and get pure, and it seems there are no floating thoughts, that this is what is called having no false thoughts. That would be a major error. When you have set aside those floating thoughts, and you feel that you are sitting there, seemingly very pure, that is precisely the root of a big false thought. So if you cannot empty out this one, there is nothing to say. If you can empty out this thought, after you have broken through your body and mind, then you can experience true thusness, and immediately reach the level which is called illuminating mind and seeing true nature. Sudden enlightenment means enlightenment to this. You must pay attention to this point.

Let's take another look at methods of cultivation. In the book *The Zen School's Direct Pointing: The Great Matter* there is an account of Zen master Kao-feng Miao of the Sung-Yuan period. He is a true model for the practice of Zen in later generations, because we can say very frankly that Zen master Kao-feng Miao trained himself, and liberated his mind, to the point that he reached a realm of consciousness that transcended the circumstances of apparent reality. But there is another fact that is related in his story: his body was still not healthy. Here we must realize that the phenomena of form are part of the phenomena of mind. Before we can be right we must transform the phenomena of form.

Why couldn't Kao-feng Miao transform his body? This is a very big question. If we say that he could not transform the phenomena of form, then doesn't this overturn the basic rule of Buddhism explained by *The Hua-yen Sutra*: "You must observe that in the true nature of the realm of reality, everything is created by mind alone"? Supposing that this principle is correct, that an enlightened person must be able to get rid of birth, old age, sickness, and death. He must be able to transform the five *skandhas* and the four elements that make up the physical body. Correct theories and actual facts must not contradict each other. We must pay special attention to this point. We modern

people must be clear in our concepts of cultivating practice. In fact, the Buddhist scriptures have already explained this all very clearly.

In the Zen method of cultivation, there are many people who follow the same road as Zen master Kao-feng Miao. There are a few exceptions among the eminent monks, like Master Chi-tien.

There were a number of great Zen worthies during the Sung Dynasty who feigned madness, like Chi-tien, after they were enlightened. An example was Lin the Wine Immortal. After he was enlightened, he devoted himself to drinking wine. His songs were all drunken songs, but like Chi-tien, they all explained things very clearly.

After the Sung Dynasty, why did such people act like this after they had been enlightened to the Path? There was a reason in this. In the centuries since the T'ang Dynasty Buddhists, and the Sung Dynasty Neo-Confucians, everyone in Chinese cultural circles had a serious and solemn demeanor. This was true of Confucians, Taoists, and Buddhists alike. All their cells became rigid, especially their humor cells. The stories of Judge Pao say that Judge Pao never ever laughed: he was an incorruptible official, somber and serious, wasn't he? He had no contact with relatives and friends at all. How flavorless this kind of human life would be! Many people assumed the countenance of Pao the upright magistrate, and in religious circles this was even more true. These enlightened eminent monks pretended to be crazy and deliberately confused you. If cultivating the Path leads to the demeanor of a dead man, what Path is this? That kind of stuffy sanctimonious manner is cancerous.

The Path is not like this. The natural potential is leaping with life. After you have comprehended this, if you hold onto this kind of empty realm, in the end you will achieve a sanctimonious appearance. This is exactly what the Zen School called dead-tree Zen. A dead tree cannot put forth flowers. With dead-tree Zen, you definitely cannot have the flower open at the assembly on Spirit Peak and see Buddha. Look and see how casual and relaxed the realm of Shakyamuni Buddha was. He did not wear a stuffy and sanctimonious look on his face. Recognize this idea clearly first, and then we will study further the theory of the five *skandhas* from the Buddhist scriptures.

We have discussed that the five *skandhas* are all false thoughts. Now we will look at the relationship between the five *skandhas* and seeing truth. Seeing truth is a meditative accomplishment. The five *skandhas* are form, sensation, conception, synthesis, and consciousness.

Form includes the four great elements—earth, water, fire, and wind. It includes not only the entire physical body, but also the material world. For example, when we rub our eyes, we can see flashes of light before our eyes. This is brought about by our optic nerve sending forth light when it is subjected to the pressure of rubbing, it is a phenomenon that is evoked in response to this. In the Buddhist scriptures such things are called "flowers in the sky" [meaning optical illusions]. If you think these flashes of light are the Path, you must be crazy! Those flashes of light are transformations produced by the nervous system. How can you not understand this? It is also a similar principle when the ears hear sound and when the nose smells scents. All of this belongs to the category of the *skandha* of form.

In *The Heart Sutra* it says: "Form itself is emptiness, and emptiness itself is form." But let me ask you, how is it that you have not emptied out? When most of you sit in meditation, your legs get very numb so obviously you have not emptied out the phenomena of form. Why do your legs get numb? Because inside your body there is moist *ch'i,* and it does not flow through the energy channels. As another instance, if you have a sickness inside, then you will have a reaction. And if you have a reaction, how can you be empty? "Form itself is emptiness, and emptiness itself is form." But you tell me: If you do not concern yourself with form and emptiness in your mind, then why do you have to cultivate the Path? If you have no feelings when you are sleeping, isn't that "Form itself is emptiness, and emptiness itself is form"? Don't deceive yourself about all of this.

Such things as the Esoteric Buddhist theory of energy *(ch'i)* channels, and the Taoist theory of the special meridians and the eight channels, are all based on real experience in the work of meditative concentration. The ancients just took these experiences and recorded them. When people in later generations studied them, they put an exaggerated importance on what were casual remarks by the ancients, marveling at talk of major orbits and minor orbits. They considered transmitting these methods to be transmitting the Path itself, which is totally mistaken. In fact, no matter whether you cultivate some energy channels or some orbits all day long, this is all just meditation work within the intensified practices. The aim of this work is first to be able to reach the level where the phenomena of form are empty. When you have really opened the energy channels, only then will you really be able to empty out your physical body. This is the stage of "form itself is emptiness." But you have still not reached the stage of "emptiness itself is form."

When you have completely opened up the physiological component first, only then are you able to realize that "form itself is emptiness." When you develop further and reach the level where "emptiness itself is form," this is the function of true emptiness giving rise to wondrous being, when both spiritual powers and wisdom arrive. To say that "form itself is emptiness" is like taking a mountain or a building and breaking it apart and destroying it and leveling it. "Emptiness itself is form" is like rebuilding on the level ground and erecting a strong solid edifice. This is the Buddha Dharma's "true emptiness gives rise to wondrous being." Only when you reach this level will you be able to recognize just what false thought is. This is the first point.

The second point is this. "Form itself is emptiness. Emptiness itself is form. Form is no different from emptiness. Emptiness is no different from form." These four statements include several stages of both Mahayana and Hinayana meditation work. But to realize this still does not count as enlightenment for the sutra immediately goes on to say very simply: "Sensation, conception, synthesis, and consciousness are also like this."

None of you have yet reached the stage where you realize that "form itself is emptiness." "Form is no different from emptiness, emptiness is no different from form" is even more difficult to realize. For this you must accomplish the seeing truth, cultivating realization, and carrying out of vows in the Mahayana realm. When the phenomena of form are not different from emptiness, when there is no duality between form and emptiness, this is the Dharma Gate of non-duality.

"Form is no different from emptiness" means that the phenomena of form are empty. Let us ponder the words written here. What is the difference between "form is no different from emptiness" and "form itself is emptiness"? Logically there is a great difference. This is a difficulty in written Chinese.

A person who has genuinely reached emptiness will of course certainly be able to arrive at "emptiness is no different from form." As Elder Li said: "In an endless number of lands, we are not separated from them by even a hairsbreadth." So a person who reaches emptiness will certainly achieve the spiritual powers of the arhats and the buddhas which the Buddhist scriptures talk about: this will not be hard to do at all. Emptiness and form are fundamentally a single

essence, and their function is also one. It's like the electric outlets in our houses: we can plug an electric lamp into them, or a tape recorder, or an electric fan. Because they are all electrical, fundamentally it is a single essence.

We still have not finished discussing form, but let's put it aside for the time being.

Now, for the second topic, we will talk about the *skandha* of "sensation." This means feeling or sensing. Mostly this sensing is a physiological response. Examples are feeling cold, feeling hot, feeling the breath moving in and out, feeling full, feeling hungry, and so on. Beside physiological responses, there are also emotional sensations. In terms of the distinction between nature and sentiments in Chinese culture, these emotional sensations belong to the category of sentiments, whereas the phenomena of form belong to the category of nature. Why do the phenomena of form belong to the category of nature? This is a big question which is not simple to answer. But let's put that aside as well.

Whatever we study, whether it is Esoteric Buddhism, or Pure Land Buddhism, it is always the same. Everybody works at sitting meditation for a long time, but all they are doing there is playing with sensations. The questions people ask their teachers are all about an ache here and a pain there. A hundred people out of a hundred ask these worthless questions. They ask them until the teachers don't want to go on living anymore! Being surrounded by crazy people all day long, if they don't go crazy themselves, they are still half dead. In fact, we have not understood the Buddhist scriptures clearly at all: we are all just playing with sensations.

You recite *The Heart Sutra* over and over: "Form itself is emptiness. Emptiness itself is form." When you feel your legs get numb, and this sensation comes, why can't you empty it out and get rid of it? Since you cannot empty it out, what can you empty out? If you had ability, you would empty out this *skandha* of sensation.

Thus, you must pay careful attention to this. You turn this one, and turn that one, but frankly speaking, that sixth consciousness of yours with its false thoughts is already stuck there revolving in a trap. You think a person is doing the energy work *(ch'i-kung)* called turning the water wheel, is transforming the *ch'i* channels, the three channels *(mai)* and the seven chakras, but the better he or she turns

them, the more he or she is enmeshed in cyclical existence, in *samsara*, the cycle of birth and death.

Let's not even talk about cyclical existence. You sit there meditating, and your thoughts and feelings are all trapped there turning around and around. You don't do anything at all. Look: outside the people are all busy, while you are there all day long sitting in mediation, snatching some leisure, playing with your spirit, turning the water wheel. Thus, not one in a hundred is really cultivating the Path.

"Sensation itself is emptiness." So why don't you seek liberation here? We study Buddhism in order to seek liberation. But what happens in the end is that we are incapable of liberation, and we are all fooling around in the realm of sensation.

Third is the *skandha* of conception. This conception is even easier to handle. Everyone says: "When I sit in meditation, everything is fine, it's just that false thoughts are not cut off." "Conception itself is emptiness, and emptiness itself is conception." The thoughts you conceive are empty, so what's the need to try to empty them? They are fundamentally empty: it's not that we go empty them.

In other words, it is that "it" comes to empty us. What is "it"? It is fundamental mind, with no duality between self and others. When it comes to empty you, your false thoughts basically cannot survive. Every idea, every thought, passes like this. Thus, "conception itself is emptiness, and emptiness itself is conception." It's just that we cannot get to "conception itself is emptiness." If we could accomplish this, then we would attain *samadhi*, and get the fruit of enlightenment.

As for "conception is no different from emptiness and emptiness is no different from conception," that is real meditation work. If you can do this, then this is what Elder Li spoke of all as "we and they are not two."

The fourth one, the *skandha* of synthesis, is even more important. This synthesis is the movement of life, it is the fundamental functioning of the movement of life. Only when you understand the *skandha* of synthesis can you understand what illuminating mind means and what false thought means. Of course, you still cannot talk about seeing true nature.

So when we sit in meditation properly, and we have no false thoughts, how is it that they come back again? They come from the *skandha* of synthesis. It does not obey you. If you cannot empty out the

skandha of synthesis, you might as well give up wanting to empty out false thoughts! You see, enlightenment isn't so easy.

After you have emptied out the *skandha* of synthesis, only then will you have a way to empty out the preceding *skandhas* of form, sensation, and conception. Pay attention to this! You should make a thorough study of the *skandha* of synthesis. This is very important. As for how to empty out the *skandha* of synthesis, listen to the explanation in the next chapter.

12

LIBERATION FROM FALSE THOUGHT

Now we will discuss how to realize the station of the fruit of enlightenment. This station of the fruit of enlightenment includes both Hinayana and Mahayana.

Seeing truth is of paramount importance. When we speak of genuine seeing truth, this is not the understanding that is ordinarily talked about. Rather, it is seeing the truth of the Path, the absolute truth. When you really see the truth of the Path, you can succeed in subsequently cultivating realization and carrying out vows. This is the sudden enlightenment extolled by the Zen School. It is not ordinary learning or understanding. It is not an academic or learned viewpoint.

Because we have no way to see the Path, we devise all sorts of ways to cultivate realization. These are the methods of gradual cultivation. Shakyamuni Buddha cultivated practice for twelve years, and at last saw a bright star and was enlightened to the Path: this, too, was seeing truth. The aspect of seeing truth is the most important. It is also the truth of *prajna* and consciousness-only. Seeing truth means the true pattern, the true principle, and this truth includes all things, and all forms of the work of cultivating realization.

In the last chapter I quoted from *The Heart Sutra:* "Form itself is emptiness. Emptiness itself is form. Form is no different from emptiness. Emptiness is no different from form." This principle, too, includes all the forms of the work of cultivating realization. The last lecture proceeded by correlating doing meditation work with seeing truth. Now we will return to study *The Heart Sutra*'s teaching: "Sensation itself is emptiness. Emptiness itself is sensation. Sensation is no different from emptiness. Emptiness is no different from sensation." Sensation means the aspect of feeling: our feelings toward physical and mental states.

Frankly, no matter whether they study Esoteric Buddhism or Taoism or the exoteric schools of Buddhism, there are many people who spend most of their time when they do meditation work revolving in the realm of the *skandha* of sensation. All people get trapped by

this realm. Thus people who are attached to the aspect of doing meditation work become more and more arrogant. This is because meditation work is cumulative, and the real feelings of those who have a bit of meditative accomplishment are no longer the same as those of ordinary people, so their meditation work becomes more and more special, and the attitude of arrogance naturally increases. Meditative accomplishment is not achieved by chance. Rather, it forms cumulatively over time. For this reason, it "has attainment," it is not without attainment. But the Buddha Dharma is ultimately an uncontrived, uncreated phenomenon. But if everyone changes this to use the attitude that there is attainment to seek the result in which there is no attainment, they all naturally end up running off in the opposite direction from the Path.

From this you can understand why it is that when the ordinary person studies the Buddhist Path and has meditation work and a perception of the truth, that [so-called] perception of the truth is still revolving within the *skandha* of sensation. This is especially true of those who work with contrived meditations, and energy channels, and experiential realms. Because their perception of truth is not sufficient, and they have not yet achieved *prajna*, they are all attached to these realms. In other words, what they call doing meditation work is all running after bodily sensations. They feel: "Ah! The *ch'i* has reached my back, but it's stuck at my spine and cannot pass. It cannot pass through some channel or some chakra."

For people who study the Path like this, the more books they read, and the more principles they understand, the more terribly constricted their meditation work is. They are always within the realm of the *skandha* of sensation, and they never understand that they must apply their efforts to the aspect of *prajna*. "Sensation itself is emptiness. Emptiness itself is sensation. Sensation is no different from emptiness. Emptiness is no different from sensation." Therefore, when a bit of energy moves in the body, the mind moves along with it. Because they have not penetrated through to *prajna*, the realm of the *skandha* of sensation becomes more and more serious for them, and they never get free of it. Even after they die, when their breath no longer comes, their intermediate *yin* body is still trapped in another realm of sensation.

Do *ch'i* channels really exist or not? They definitely do exist. They are natural things, there is nothing special about them. The more you feel them, the greater the obstacles will be for you, so that as soon as you don't do meditation work, you will not experience them anymore.

People in general who do meditation work nowadays all have a common failing. As soon as they sit down to meditate, they all want a bit of purity. This feeling of purity gradually becomes a habit with them. In reality, their conscious state is a feeling of purity, but this purity is only a psychological sensation of a state of consciousness, and that's all. This is matched against their ordinary feelings of boredom and depression, and so when they sit in meditation they feel very comfortable, because for them sitting in meditation amounts to taking a rest! After this feeling of comfort, they gradually get bored again. When they are getting bored, then they feel "meditation work is a matter of searching for the self," so they hastily shut their eyes and confine themselves there. In fact, this feeling of confinement is all "darkness and confusion," and they still cannot reach the state of "holding to inner peace and ease." They think that this is meditation work, that this is the Path, but in reality this is all within the realm of the *skandha* of sensation, all within states of feeling. People who spend a long time here will end up with their minds stiff and rigid. Though this may be a bit better than being indifferent and mindless, they are still sunk in oblivion forever, muddled and confused, without a bit of *prajna*.

If under these conditions you penetrate through to the liberation of *prajna*, of wisdom, then you will know that: "Sensation itself is emptiness. Emptiness itself is sensation. Sensation is no different from emptiness. Emptiness is no different from sensation." Once you abandon these states of sensation, then you can begin to talk about liberation and transcendence. But the average person is in the realm that he has before him, and has no way to transcend it. This is how deeply states of sensation trap people.

In the last lecture we talked about the question of thinking. This thinking of ours is the thinking of the conceptual consciousness. If we want to make a rigorous study of this, it is a very big question. In Buddhist theory thinking and mentation are distinguished. The coarse form is called thinking: the brain waves are leaping along very quickly. As for mentation, when we are on the verge of sleep, and it seems there is no thinking, in reality there is still a little bit of the function of thinking, a very rarefied form of it. This is mentation.

Here is another example. When someone is talking, and we are listening, we can distinguish at the same time what is correct and what is incorrect, and understand quite a bit. This is all the function of thinking. Mentation does not have this false thought. A Zen master gave this analogy: it is like when you owe someone money, and

you have to pay them back the next day, but you haven't got the money. Then even if today you are here sitting in meditation, listening to Buddhist theories, and studying various things, you cannot get your mind off this matter. This is the functioning of mentation: it is a force always suspended there.

The *skandha* of conception is really "mentation," part coarse and part fine. It is the discriminating mind in the realm of the conceptual consciousness.

In sentient beings who have not yet achieved enlightenment, discriminating thought comes along with birth. An infant does not yet have the discriminating mind of the sixth consciousness, but we cannot say it has no thinking. Its thinking is not the discriminating mind, but it does have "the characteristics of darkness and confusion." As its age increases, its discriminating intellect gradually develops. Thus a young child's thinking is comparatively naive and ingenuous, and also comparatively pure and clean. It's too bad that as people grow up they become less and less lovable. The older people get, the more unpleasant they become. This is because when the sixth consciousness becomes stronger, defilements gradually multiply. What's more, such things as habits and ideas of right and wrong and good and evil increase to a terrible extent, and people all feel that they are correct.

This thing that gradually forms and turns into a habitual pattern is mentation. Mentation turns into a karmic force, and becomes the seeds that are brought along into future births. Thus habits of consciousness from previous births, that is, the habit-energy brought along from previous births, cause people's characters to differ. Some people like to laugh, some people like to get mad. All this comes along from previous births.

Because of this, the buddhas call upon us to abandon the myriad entangling objects, and empty out everything. But can you empty out this thing called mentation or not? If you cannot empty this out, and you think that the realm when consciousness is pure is emptiness, then you are deceiving yourself, and you will be no match for things. At the end, when you are near death and they are giving you oxygen, your meditation work and your Buddhism will be totally useless. So above all you must not make this mistake. But many people who do meditation work are all revolving in this. This is because their *prajna* wisdom is insufficient, their wisdom of seeing truth is not pure, and they do not carry out their vows enough.

If you have not developed genuine roots of goodness, then *prajna* will not come to you. Thus *The Diamond Sutra* only talks about two things—one is *prajna*, and the other is merit. Why is this? Only when you have achieved great merit will you have great wisdom. If you seek wisdom by just sitting in meditation, this is the Hinayana method, engendering wisdom by discipline and concentration. The Mahayana method does not talk about this. What the Mahayana method talks about is the six perfections: giving, discipline, patience, energy, meditative concentration, and only after these five, *prajna*.

Generally when people start to work at meditation, their biggest difficulty and confusion is that they cannot cut off false thoughts. Who told you to cut off false thoughts? False thoughts are fundamentally neither cut off nor eternal: they cannot be cut off. "You draw your sword to cut through the stream, but the stream keeps flowing. You sit in meditation to resolve your sorrows, but your sorrows are even more sorrowful." This is why when some people sit in meditation their brows become more and more furrowed.

False thoughts are fundamentally empty, after all! It is not necessary for you to try to cut them off. "Sensation itself is emptiness. Emptiness itself is sensation. Sensation is no different from emptiness. Emptiness is no different from sensation." Furthermore, we have all studied Yogacara consciousness-only theory. Yogacara has a term—"the five omnipresent activities," meaning intentionality, contact, sensation, conception, and thought. These functions are present in all eight consciousnesses, so they can naturally produce these functions.

To put it another way, the basic capacity of our life is divided into two parts: one is states of feeling, and one is states of knowing. States of feeling are half physical and half psychological. States of thought are also this way: principally psychological, but bringing along with them a physical component. Yogacara tells us that these are the "five omnipresent activities." That is to say, they are present everywhere throughout the functioning of the eight consciousnesses. Therefore, how can you cut them off? So it is no use trying to cut off thinking. The Sixth Patriarch also told us this: "I have no tricks, I do not cut off the myriad thoughts. When mental states relative to objects arise, how can enlightenment increase?" Thoughts are fundamentally empty. Why try to cut them off? Won't the one in you that knows you are thinking still be there?

But as it turns, out all of you act in the opposite way. When you sit in meditation, that fundamental purity of yours is engaged all the time in trying to suppress thoughts, and you wrongly expend your effort there. If you act this way, even if you sit for ten thousand years, there will be no results.

To take a step further, after you have been able to transform the five omnipresent activities, you will become a buddha right where you stand. This is impossible without achieving the wisdom of *prajna*. Thus Yogacara definitely does not tell us that we attain buddhahood when we have cut off false thoughts. Rather, Yogacara tells us that we must transform consciousness into wisdom. All it takes is this transformation, and then we achieve buddhahood. It depends on whether or not you have undergone this transformation. The use of this word "transformation" is very good. The reason that we ordinary people cannot become buddhas is that our mentality has not been transformed. This is due to the force of karma, which drags us along and binds us tightly. When we transform consciousness, then we achieve wisdom, and when we achieve wisdom, we are liberated.

Thus it is very easy for everyone to sit in meditation: "Sensation itself is emptiness. Emptiness itself is sensation. Sensation is no different from emptiness. Emptiness is no different from sensation."

But there is one further difficulty: the *skandha* of synthesis. It is a force which impels birth and destruction. We may want to cut if off, but it cannot be cut off. Why not? This *skandha* of synthesis is like the revolving of the universe, always moving. To describe it we can borrow a statement from *The Diamond Sutra*: "There is nowhere it comes from and nowhere it goes." When it comes, it comes without us knowing where it comes from; when it goes, it departs without us knowing where it goes to. Through past, present, and future, it is always proceeding like this. This is the *skandha* of synthesis, the moving source, always in motion. It is the most difficult of all for us to transform.

Before the *skandha* of synthesis has stopped, before it has found a state of rest, there will never be a way to cut off the prior *skandhas* of form, sensation, and conception. They will keep coming forever. The psychological component is also the same way: it flows on forever without interruption. When we sit in meditation, why do we feel that we cannot empty out? Because the *skandha* of synthesis has not been emptied out.

In principle, we will have succeeded in our cultivation of practice if we can get to this point: "Synthesis itself is emptiness. Emptiness

itself is synthesis. Synthesis is no different from emptiness. Emptiness is no different from synthesis." But have we managed to reach the point described in the first sentence, "Synthesis itself is emptiness"? "Synthesis is no different from emptiness" means that there is no duality between synthesis and emptiness. Have we accomplished this or not? If our false thoughts are purified as soon as we sit in meditation, this implies that the *skandha* of synthesis does not have emptiness. In other words, space itself also has the *skandha* of synthesis. Therefore this universe is always revolving: the revolving motion is its *skandha* of synthesis.

Whether or not we average people can stop the *skandha* of synthesis is connected to realizing the Path. For this we must rely on the meditation work of the four *dhyanas* and the eight *samadhis*, and reach the point where the *ch'i* and the channels stop. When the *ch'i* stops, not only does the breath moving in and out stop, but all the life forces of the body come to a state of rest. At this point, the *skandha* of synthesis, which pushes along the flowing movements of the body and mind, can be reckoned to have stopped.

If the *skandha* of synthesis does not stop, then the physiological component cannot stop its movement, and the psychological component cannot stop its movement either. So how can we return to the root source, and go back to our fundamental inherent nature? There is one road that is the quickest: the liberation of wisdom, *prajna*, sudden enlightenment. The average person who cannot achieve sudden enlightenment can only cultivate gradual practice, and advance step by step. Thus *The Surangama Sutra* tells us very clearly about the process of liberation from the five *skandhas*. We must pay special attention to this. It's ridiculous to think you can just see a peach blossom and awaken.

The reason that we cannot truly succeed in cultivation is that we cannot be liberated from the *skandha* of synthesis and the *skandha* of conception, and we cannot be liberated from the *skandhas* of form and sensation either. If you say you have some experiential realm of purity, this is only imaginary: it is no more than a realm of the imagination of the sixth consciousness. It is certainly not the realization of true emptiness. If you want to realize true emptiness, the study materials I have selected from *The Surangama Sutra* tell us all about how to do so. All of you who want to succeed in your cultivation of Zen, T'ien-t'ai, Esoteric Buddhism, or Pure Land cannot depart from these basic principles [set forth in *The Surangama Sutra*].

After you have taken another step forward and have been liberated from the *skandha* of synthesis, then you can begin to talk

about liberation from the *skandha* of consciousness. This *skandha* of consciousness is not only the sixth consciousness: all the eight consciousnesses discussed by Yogacara are included within it. It is what *The Lankavatara Sutra* calls "mind, intentionality, and consciousness."

The spiritual states which are known to us are no more than a type of transformation of consciousness. Thus, to use the word "spirit" to explain this concept of consciousness is an inverted explanation. Strictly speaking, this concept of consciousness represents the entirety of the essence, form, and function of the eight consciousnesses. It also represents the entire functional capacity of the spiritual world and the material world.

We must study *The Treatise on the Gate for Illuminating the Hundred Phenomena* to understand this. This work distinguishes the phenomena of form from mental phenomena. It also categorizes "twenty-four kinds of phenomena that are not correlated with mind." But take note. If you really separate the phenomena of form and mental phenomena and put them in opposition to each other, then you really don't want to study Buddhism. To put it another way, if God and the Devil are standing opposite each other, God will never have a way to cope with the Devil. In reality, this division between the phenomena of form and mental phenomena is just a means of expression, and that's all. It distinguishes them and analyzes them to make it easy for us to understand. In reality, the phenomena of form and mental phenomena have a single source.

When the treatise speaks of phenomena that are not correlated with mind, it means that in the universe there are twenty-four things that are not subject to the control of the sixth consciousness, that the human mentality has no way to control. The first example is the universe's time. There is no way for you to control it. You may say that when you are asleep you can empty out time. I'm sorry, but time is still marching on, and you cannot change it. The second example is momentum. For instance, the force of water flowing downward is so great that if you stand in its rapid flow, even if you say, as Buddha did, "In heaven and on earth, I alone am the honorable one," you will still be knocked down and washed away by the water. Thus, when the Bodhisattva Shih-chih [whose name in Chinese means "momentum arrives"] comes, all the Bodhisattva Kuan-shih-yin can do is stand off to the side. These two bodhisattvas are used here as a manner of expression. When a great force of momentum arrives, we ask the Bodhisattva Kuan-shih-yin to lead the way for us: when this momentum comes, no human can control it.

Thus, no matter how well you do your meditation work, you still get old, the four elements of the physical body still undergo transformation, and when the time of your death arrives, it arrives. For example, when we sit in meditation, after we have sat for a half hour or an hour, we cannot go on sitting: our legs have become numb, and even if we want to keep sitting, we are unable to. This is because the momentum of the *skandha* of synthesis has reached this point. You tell me you still want *samadhi*, but your mind cannot transform the phenomena that are not correlated with mind. If you cannot even transform these at all, then how can you talk about transforming consciousness into wisdom, transforming the force of karma, or transforming affliction into enlightenment?

In such a situation, we must raise our vigilance. We can explain ordinary principles all very well, but when circumstances arise, we cannot get past them. You say you are still cultivating the Path and sitting in meditation, and you say that when phenomena arise every one is the Path, but why is it that when you sit and do meditation work, wanting to finish with birth and death, instead the road behind is vague and dim and the road ahead is dark? So I tell you that you must first comprehend the reasons for this.

The *skandha* of consciousness is the hardest to understand. Therefore in *The Surangama Sutra* it says that you come to the *skandha* of consciousness only at the fifth level of liberation after having been liberated from the realms of the first four skandhas.

A student raised the following question after studying *The Surangama Sutra*. Why is it that the *skandha* of conception is called synthesizing false thought, and the *skandha* of consciousness is called inverted false thought? Shouldn't it be the other way around?

According to the schema of the sutra, the realm of the *skandha* of conception produces ten realms of delusion. In fact, there are not only ten: its transformations give rise to hundreds and thousands of realms of delusion. For example, when a person has spiritual powers, and knows things before hand without doing divination, this is all the functioning of thought within the five *skandhas*. Modern day people call this capability names like "the sixth sense," or "the sensitivity of the mind's spirit," or "an uncanny ability." So many kinds of ghosts! These are all patterns of the transformations of thinking and false thought. This is simply synthesizing false thought. It takes the capabilities and transformations of false thought and seems to be able to comprehend and know the myriad objects, so it is described as "synthesizing false thought."

Why then is the realm of the *skandha* of consciousness called inverted false thought? Because this is not called a realm of delusion; rather, it is called an outside path, and this includes the realms of the *shravakas* and *pratyekas*. People who have attained the four fruits of arhats are still said to be outside the Path. Why is this? Because their perception of truth does not reach the ultimate. So this is called "inverted false thought."

The five *skandhas* are all called false thought. Thus we know that when people who study Zen sit down to meditate and try to eliminate false thought, and think they are eliminating the sixth consciousness, in reality, what they eliminate is no more than a little bit of the oil of the discriminating mind of the sixth consciousness floating on the surface. The real false thought is everything from the subterranean depths to the superficial level. Therefore, if you want to eliminate false thought, you must be sure to get rid of all the false thought of the five *skandhas*. Only then can you speak of reaching emptiness.

You should not think: "Aha! I will sit in meditation until I am completely empty and I am very comfortable." That is only a realm of the imagination of the sixth consciousness. The empty space that we see with our two eyes is only a certain size, so when we sit in meditation, and close our eyes, the empty space we imagine is also only a certain size. The limit of people's imagination is usually correlated with the limits to which their life force has developed. So see for yourself how much our thoughts like to play: in realms of deluded confusion, our ideas of right and wrong and good and evil are all upside-down. How narrow is the scope we recognize. But within this consciousness and this thinking, we feel we are very sublime and extraordinarily great! This is all of us fooling ourselves, it is not genuine emptiness.

All this belongs in the category of seeing truth. You must pay special attention to seeing truth in relation to liberation from the five *skandhas*. No matter whether you are a person of some attainment, or you have just entered the gate, you must not take the wrong road here.

The next issue is this. Among the five *skandhas* of form, sensation, conception, synthesis, and consciousness, the most important in our lives is thinking, the *skandha* of conception, also called false thought. This thinking is a transformation of the *skandha* of consciousness. Consciousness is mind, mind in the sense of what *The Yogacarabhumi Shastra* speaks of as "mind, intentionality, and consciousness." It is not mind as the fundamental essence. The second most important is the *skandha* of sensation. From birth, humans have a capacity for feeling and sensing, which comes from the *skandha* of sensation.

If we categorize form as the physical component, then conception and sensation must belong to the spiritual component. The ones that include both the physical and spiritual components are the *skandhas* of synthesis and consciousness.

When we listen to this account, our thinking should not be directed toward the outside. We should turn back and search inside ourselves, search trying to apply these categories. The true Buddha Dharma does not tell us not to think. Buddhist philosophy called meditative concentration "correct contemplation"; later on the Zen School called it "studying and investigating." Meditative concentration does not call for you to revolve along with your body. The *ch'i* channels are moving, but you should not pay attention to those movements of the *skandha* of sensation. The correct thing to do is to seek in correct contemplation. In Chinese Taoism before the Han dynasty this was called "refined contemplation." What the Taoists called "entering the spirit through refined contemplation" is what the Zen School called studying and investigating. When all of you sit in meditation, you are always befuddled by the realms of physical sensation. You have not yet truly experienced correct contemplation, so that does not count as true Zen *samadhi*.

The emphasis of Buddhism is on seeing truth. The main theme in the foregoing discussion is this: We have used the guiding principle of *The Mahaprajnaparamita Heart Sutra* which says that "the five *skandhas* are all empty," and coordinated this with *The Surangama Sutra*'s teaching on liberation from the five *skandhas*. This is where the emphasis in this series of lectures lies. This is seeing truth. You must comprehend this truth: only then can you do meditation work, only then can you really talk about cultivating practice. Otherwise, even if you do your meditation work as well as you can, it will be no match for things, and it will be useless. Even if you do meditation work to the point that your body can emit light and shake the earth, it still will be useless. If it were otherwise, it would not be the Buddha Dharma. That's why you cannot find in any of the Buddhist scriptures concrete descriptions of how to do meditation work. The Buddhist scriptures only discuss the principle of seeing truth, because when you genuinely succeed in seeing truth, you will surely succeed in meditation work. In

other words, if you reach a certain perception and understanding, but you have not had success in your meditation work, that perception and understanding are not true perception and understanding.

Suppose someone is holding in his hand a famous precious cup inlaid with precious pearls. Suddenly it breaks. A liberated person would not care at all: he knows it is broken. A person who is not liberated would look at the shattered cup and cry and wail. He clearly knows that it is broken, but he picks up that shattered cup and is still crying and wailing. He understands emptiness, but as it turns out he still picks up that useless thing and brings grief and pain to that emptiness: is this useful?

It does not matter if it is a minor matter: if you understand the same principle, then this is the Path. That's why when the ancestral teachers of the Zen School awakened at one small point, the whole thing was clarified. This was the same sort of thing.

You must not think that this is idle talk. The great Zen worthies of ancient times laughed for joy and scolded in anger, but if you take this as ordinary meaningless laughter and scolding, then you have wasted what they said. They were pointing out things to you all the time. Sometimes they didn't want to scold you directly to your face, so they just directed a bit of humor toward your dilly-dallying. When you say east, they say west: in reality, they are hitting you, hitting at your self-love and self-regard.

For example, when we first sent out notices of this lecture series to all of you, we announced to everyone that there would be no exceptions: you couldn't be careless, and you could only enroll for the lectures if you really fulfilled the stipulated conditions. All of you enrolled, but how many have really fulfilled them? No one has really fulfilled the requirement to take notes or any of the other requirements. This is the gate of "practice." When a person of integrity makes an agreement, if he says he will do something, he does it. Since you want to come listen to the lectures, you must keep to these rules, right? Has anyone done this? Why must you act this way? Do you understand? Thus I want to take my cudgel and start hitting out everywhere. If the blows awaken you, you will get the benefit yourselves. If the blows do not awaken you, it's all over.

This is practice. I'm still just talking about the taking notes part: the other parts I'll not discuss. This is all connected to mental conduct. As the saying goes, "In the gate of the myriad practices, not one thing is abandoned." How can we talk about Buddhist cultivation of

practice? No matter how good our personal friendships are, there is no way to talk about the true gate of practice. As soon as we talk about it, we have no choice but to scold people. All we can do is say to ourselves: "Alas! The Tathagata said they are to be pitied."

The gate of practice is inseparable from seeing truth. When your perception of truth reaches a certain stage, your mental activity cannot but change. The great enlightened teachers and the great Zen masters know at a glance whether or not a person has progressed. Do not think that when your complexion improves or your *ch'i* channels open that this is the Path. That is just teasing you.

When your *ch'i* channels open, this has nothing to do with the Path. People of great wisdom do not fall for this deception. There were many Zen masters who covered their ears as soon as their teachers praised them, and would not listen. Would they accept this flattery? Of course not! They acted the same way whether they were enlightened or not. Of all the things in the world, what harms people the most is flattery. You can deceive a person without breaking the law, and utterly swindle him, and he will still thank you for it. If you speak the truth, no one will listen, so there will be nothing you can do. That's why I often say the grass in front of my house would grow three feet tall.

In people who have reached the stage of seeing truth, there is an immediate transformation in their mental activity. They know how to act, and they are immediately transformed. If an enlightened teacher takes one look at them, he knows their mental activity has already been transformed.

Activity includes many things. For example, if you like to be dishonest and lazy, your activity is incorrect. Another example is compassion, which is the first point discussed in Buddhism. Think about it and take a look at yourself: have you accomplished any compassion? We have accomplished one bit of compassion: we want other people to be compassionate to us. What about "wanting to save sentient beings?" Have we done this? Reflect on yourself. You don't even have a way to save those people who are the closest to you, so are you saving sentient beings in general?

You must reflect back at all times and see how many evils are hidden under these fair words. The more beautiful the words, the more they hide our own faults. If you do not carry your investigation to this level in your study of Buddhism, there's nothing to talk about. Nobody does this, nobody can do it. Yet they all use a calculating

mentality, and carry out this process of probing beneath the surface of beautiful words in order to discover the actual content when they conduct business and trade. This is especially true of the present era.

The discussion above is about seeing truth: the general outline is like this. In a word, seeing truth is extremely important. It cannot be explained completely in a few sentences.

You should, therefore, read Elder Li's *Collected Essays on the Hua-yen Sutra*. You should pay attention to all the Buddhist scriptures and read them. There are many people who study Buddhism without investigating the scriptures. In the T'ang dynasty system for regulating Buddhism, to leave home to become a monk or nun it was necessary to take an examination on the scriptures. An ordination certificate representing official government permission to become a monk or nun was only issued to those who had mastered one of the scriptures.

Frankly speaking, strictly in terms of the standards of Buddhism, many of the people who study Buddhism today are not really studying Buddhism. This problem is extremely serious. I don't dare talk about this: what would be the use of talking about it? Everyone says to me: Teacher, you must explain. The Buddha Dharma certainly does not belong to me as an individual. Why must I explain? Everyone says: Teacher, it is your duty. In reality, it is everyone's duty.

With this mental activity, every time you open your mouth and say something, it is not right. If your mental activity is right, then why haven't you generated the aspiration for enlightenment? Why aren't you thinking like this: "I feel ashamed. I myself must try hard. I must save sentient beings, so I must keep on trying hard. I must cultivate practice, and when I have cultivated realization properly, I will save other people." Why aren't we willing to cultivate practice? Thus, studying Buddhism is very difficult. For seeing truth, you, yourself, must go study the Buddhist sutras and shastras. Only this will do.

Now let us turn and discuss cultivating realization. To speak of cultivating realization in terms of seeing truth, cultivating realization is something subsidiary, and not worth talking about. But to speak truly about cultivating realization is certainly not easy. Cultivating realization means doing meditation work. The school of Buddhism or the method does not matter. It does not matter whether you recite the buddha-name, study Zen, or refine the breath. It does not matter what kind of meditation work you do: they are all methods of cultivating realization. For the methods of cultivating realization there is just one main guiding principle: that is cultivating "cessation and contemplation."

At the level of cause it is called cessation and contemplation. At the level of the result it is called concentration and wisdom. Cessation is concentration, contemplation is wisdom. To put it another way, cessation is meditation work and contemplation is seeing truth. Therefore, you must cultivate both cessation and contemplation.

No matter what school or branch of Buddhism we study, at the beginning we learn quiet sitting. By no means should you divide Buddhism into different sects. The various schools of Buddhism differ only in their methods, or in the emphases of their methods. You, yourself, can choose a method to cultivate, but of course the best thing is to have the guidance of an enlightened teacher who can see which method suits you best. Relying on his or her guidance, you can choose a method to employ. People who have succeeded on the Path can spontaneously comprehend any method whatsoever.

You shouldn't equate sitting cross-legged in meditation with cultivating *samadhi*. The postures for cultivating *samadhi* are unlimited. You can achieve *samadhi* when sitting, standing, sleeping, walking, or eating: there is no place and no time that *samadhi* is impossible. However, at first we are not able to achieve cessation, and therefore it is necessary to do sitting meditation. Altogether there are several dozen postures for sitting meditation, but the most advantageous physically and psychologically is to sit cross-legged. The function of sitting cross-legged is very great. If I wrote essays on this aspect, I could get very rich. But I have a basic principle: I have sworn never to write any piece that does not benefit the moral orientation of the world and the human mind. This is my personal gate of practice.

When we sit cross-legged in meditation, our energy system truly opens up, and this generates bliss not only for the body and the mind! The inconceivable capacities of our temporal bodies all come forth. For example, when an elderly person's energy channels wholly open up, he or she can become like a baby. But are there any people in whom the energy channels in the legs have opened up? There are none, or at least I have never seen any.

One of our fellow students took note of the expression in the Buddhist scriptures describing Buddha as "the most honored one among the two-legged creatures." This is not mere theory: it is very correct. In theory, the expression "the most honored one among the two-legged creatures" means the most honored one in complete merit and the most honored one in complete wisdom. Buddha is fully equipped with the two legs of merit and wisdom, so he is called "the most honored one among the two-legged creatures." In fact, among

the five spiritual powers of the Buddha is [the power to travel anywhere instantly, called] the spiritual power of the feet. Buddha is filled with spiritual energy, and it reaches his two feet. In esoteric physiology, the root of a person is in the head; empty space is the soil, and the arms and legs are the branches. When the branches atrophy, this "tree without roots" is done for. Thus, there are many reasons for sitting cross-legged.

Once they have crossed their legs properly, people who have truly found the road use a very thorough method. Since they have understood the true principle, their cultivation of practice very quickly gets on the right track.

In the past, when Shakyamuni Buddha was in the world, his disciples would realize the fruit of arhatship in seven days or five days. This is no falsehood. Why did this happen? The people of ancient times did not have highly developed desires for material things. Their thoughts and mental states were pure and simple, so it was easy to realize the fruit of enlightenment. For modern people, the more learning they have, the harder it is for them and the less able they are to succeed [in cultivation]. This is because we are too complicated. When the ancients heard one word of the Buddha Dharma, they were sure to practice it. In the Buddhist scriptures, there is a phrase that occurs all the time: "They faithfully received the teaching and carried it out." This phrase occurs at the end of almost every scripture. This was not a mere formula: those who had been listening to the teaching really proceeded like this. All the Buddhist scriptures start with "Thus I have heard," and conclude with "They faithfully received the teaching and carried it out." If you can really do this, then you will succeed in your cultivation.

When the people of ancient times believed, they believed completely: they had faith in their teachers and faith in the Buddha. When they believed, they were immediately impressed, and their bodies and minds responded to the influence [of faith] and were transformed. Very reverently they accepted what they had been taught as precious lessons and guidelines, and went on to carry them out. Thus they succeeded.

Modern people are not this way. When you teach them the sutras, to your face they say: "Excellent, excellent. I'm very grateful." But in their minds they are thinking: "I better not fall for any tricks. I wonder what the teacher's level of attainment is." Then they turn around and look for two or three people to find out about the teacher from.

This is how different the psychology of modern people is from that of the ancients. I have seen this clearly over several decades. That's why the ancients could succeed within a few days, while modern people cannot. They cannot succeed because their own mental activities and low moral level are blocking them. Nevertheless, the innate capabilities of ancient people and modern people are the same.

Though I have spoken of seeing truth and carrying out vows, I dare not speak in detail about cultivation practice. If I did speak in detail about practice, I could tear anyone at all to ribbons. If you could manage to reach the level of "Thus I have heard" and "They faithfully received the teaching and carried it out," then you would succeed. But no one does this.

So then, how should we proceed when we sit in meditation? What we need is faith, acceptance, respectful service, and practice. Believe in yourself, and believe in the words Buddha said: inherent nature is fundamentally empty. So there was a reason that the Fourth and Fifth Zen Patriarchs extolled *The Diamond Sutra*. If you recognize emptiness, then you'll be all right. But it's not that we go empty it: it is fundamentally empty. When we sit cross-legged, as soon as we sit down we are already empty. We do not have to seek some other emptiness besides. This is the shortcut.

The first step is to sit cross-legged, and without seeking emptiness and without seeking existence, close your eyes. People in the present era use their eyes and ears too much. When you close your eyes, there is no so-called seeing and no so-called not seeing. Remember: you are fundamentally empty! At this point, when you close your eyes, you feel very good. An instant later, you immediately feel that your thoughts are very numerous, and very bothersome. Don't let them bother you! If you had no thoughts, you would not be human. The right thing to do is not to pay any attention to these thoughts. At this point, don't we know that these thoughts keep coming and going back and forth? That thing in you that knows that thoughts are coming and going is not disturbed or confused by thoughts. That one is pure, it is not deceived by thoughts and afflictions. What else are you seeking? "Buddha" means "awake." If you already know your own thoughts, isn't this being awake?

In *The Surangama Sutra* it says that our thoughts and afflictions are "afflictions of transient dusts." They are like travelers coming and going. You are the host who knows that the travelers are coming and going back and forth. But as the host in this case, you are not solicitous

and hospitable: when the travelers come you do not welcome them, and when the travelers leave you do not see them off. When they want to come, they come, and when they want to leave, they leave. You let them come and go spontaneously. The flow of thoughts gradually gets tired, and feels too lazy to move. Your correct awareness as the host should not fall asleep: it keeps observing them. If you go to sleep, the travelers here will overthrow heaven and earth.

When thoughts come, this is the second moment. The first moment that you sit cross-legged, you are very clear. By the second moment, you know that thoughts have arrived. Now these thoughts are telling us to use correct awareness to observe them.

By the third moment, there is trouble. Originally you were observing thoughts, but later on the thoughts come to make trouble for you. At that point, "If you cannot cut through them, inner truth is still in confusion." But you should not try to cut them off, and you should not pay attention to them. They will spontaneously thin out. The trouble at the third moment is that sensations come: a swelling here, an ache there. Aches, pains, swelling, numbness, itches, feelings of cold and hot—these can all develop. As soon as we become quiet, all these phenomena can arrive. When you have these manifestations as you sit in meditation, this is the first stage of the movement of the *ch'i* channels. In other words, when you become quiet, no matter whether good or bad sensations appear, it is always because your mental state is comparatively quiet, and your energy system responds.

When these sensations arrive at the third moment, how should you deal with them? The first principle still applies: all you have to do is observe them, and in this instance, you have to endure them.

When I was young, and first studying sitting meditation, I, too, could not stand to sit cross-legged. My teacher Mr. Yuan told me: Endure it for a little while. The longer you can stand it, the more you will dissolve away the force of karma. Since I could dissolve away karma, I endured it. After I had left the meditation seat, the idea of more sitting cross-legged was more than I could bear, but I stubbornly endured it because I liked overcoming feelings of being afraid of difficulties. Later on, in order to subdue these two legs of mine, I dwelled in a temple, and shut myself up alone in the tower room where the scriptures were stored to work on my legs. It was also a process of refining mind. I would sit cross-legged and stubbornly endure it, while my mind was busy seeking enlightenment. Generally I could stand it for five or six days and that was really painful! But if

I couldn't even subdue my legs, how could I subdue my mind? After several days, it would actually hurt so much that my body was all curled up. Suddenly one day, there was a snap, and my legs became supple, and felt very peaceful. I no longer wanted to stop sitting, and I felt very comfortable. Down below my friend and teacher was thinking: all day long we have not heard that man in the tower room signal for food to be brought, so there must be a problem. So he called out to me from down below. But because I was extremely comfortable, I didn't want to answer. This alarmed my teacher, so he quickly had someone climb up to the tower room who reported that I was sitting there very erect and that nothing was wrong: it was just that I hadn't answered, and that actually I was sitting in meditation.

What does this explain? Aches and pains and swelling and numbness and feelings of cold and hot are produced by the life functions. When there is a response, then there will be a shadow. No matter whether the response is good or bad, you should observe it with correct awareness. Above all, do not apply your present knowledge, whether of Esoteric Buddhist or Taoist meditation work, and try such maneuvers as leading the *ch'i* channels toward the roots of life or opening the *tu-mai* channel. Once you do this, you are done for. Not only will you not achieve the opening of the *ch'i* channels, but even more serious, you will evoke all sorts of problems. (This is especially true for women: by no means should you focus your attention below your stomach.) As soon as you try to lead the *ch'i* channels, contrary to what you expect, you will not be able to succeed.

Do such things as energy channels exist or not? If you handle them properly, in seven days a good foundation will be laid. Thus, such things as energy channels do exist. Nevertheless, you must not pay deliberate attention to the energy channels or to the four elements. When the four elements are all empty, then you will succeed with the energy channels. After you have succeeded with them, then eliminating sickness and prolonging life will be an ordinary thing to you, and you won't count it as something rare and wonderful. Even rejuvenation will not be difficult!

13

CONTEMPLATION ON PROVISIONAL EXISTENCE

Earlier I mentioned that when we first sit to meditate and our legs are properly crossed, the first moment, when we are not yet intentionally doing meditation work, is a stage of comparative purity. If we divide this into two parts for discussion purposes, one part is knowing, and another part is feeling. The states of knowing tend toward the spirit and toward thinking. The states of feeling tend toward the body.

In the previous chapter I presented a general explanation of the five *skandhas*. Later, one of our fellow students raised an objection. He said: "Teacher, ordinarily you never talk about this. Isn't knowing a problem, isn't it ignorance? Right now in *samadhi* if this knowing is there, isn't it the greatest problem?

I had said that the knowing with which you know that you are scattering in confusion or sinking into oblivion does not belong to scattering or to oblivion, and we must preserve this knowing. To this the student objected: "The knowing that knows when we are scattered in confusion and when we are pure certainly is not the ultimate. Doesn't *The Heart Sutra* say that ultimate truth is "without knowledge and without attainment?"

It is very right to ask this question. This knowing is a problem. If we study it realistically, this present knowing of ours is very clear and crisp whether or not we cultivate practice, and it may even attain *samadhi* sitting there. However, it has a precondition: this life must still exist, this physical body cannot have decayed yet, the brain and the nervous system must be healthy. Only by this means can this clear knowing exist. If the brain and nervous system are ruined, does this knowing stay in existence or not? If we die, or if our brain and nervous system are ruined, then this knowing dies along with the death of our brain and nervous system. So when we talk about the Buddha Dharma all through our lives, are we not deceiving ourselves all along? If so, then why do we have to go do this meditation work? We invest a lifetime of time and energy, and in the end it turns out to be useless.

If we say that after our brains, nervous systems, or our bodies die, this knowing has another realm of transcendent liberation, then we could discuss this question. This is a very real issue. We do not need to use Buddhist theory or Zen theory to explain it: that explanation would be too mysterious. If you say that after you die you are sure to go to some certain place, other people would not accept what you say, because right now you are saying this when you are still alive. After death, ultimately how do you attain liberation? So you say to us that when the time comes you will give us proof, but the proof you give us we cannot see: you will already be dead, and we will have no way to find you, so how can this proof be made? This is worthy paying attention to.

This knowing that we have now when we are alive, this spiritually illuminated pure knowing, thus depends on our physical bodies, on the four elements and the five *skandhas*, and takes shape within them when they are absolutely healthy.

A question then arises. For example, when people who follow the Taoist practice of cultivating the energy channels, and people who cultivate the Esoteric Buddhist practice of focusing on the energy channels have cultivated the energy channels properly, they can maintain their present lives in a state of absolute health and absolute purity, and then can even go beyond ordinary health and purity. Thus, if you experience such a realm of purity, it depends on your physical body. That is to say, this experiential realm is physiological, and depends on this physical life, on the four elements and the five *skandhas* being in existence. After the four elements and the five *skandhas* are ruined, this purity, this spiritual illumination, is not there anymore. So this is not only mind.

At that point, if our pure spiritual illumination leaves behind the physical body, and leaves behind the material world, after that can it still have another existence? The important question is how to prove this statement.

Right now, while we are still living, the first step is to preserve this knowing. Of course this knowing is just the pure aspect of the sixth consciousness. This knowing is indeed the sixth consciousness, and not the ultimate. To put it another way, in Yogacara theory this knowing belongs to the category of "mentation." When we are in quiet *samadhi*, we have this knowing which is pure spiritual illumination. When we sink into oblivion, this knowing sinks into oblivion. When we scatter in confusion, this knowing scatters in confusion. When afflictions come, this knowing is afflicted. In *The Surangama Sutra* it says the following about this knowing: "When knowing establishes [dualistic subject-object] knowing, then it is the root of ignorance. When knowing has no [dualistic] views, then it is nirvana, stainless, real, and pure."

In the past there was a Zen master who awakened to the Path when he came to this statement in reading *The Surangama Sutra.* When he read this passage (in Chinese), suddenly a spiritual feeling came upon him, and he moved the punctuation marks so the passage read like this: "When knowing is established, knowing is the root of ignorance. When knowing is absent, then seeing is nirvana." By making this change in the punctuation, the passage is transformed. Now it means that when knowing is there, when a pure realm is there, this knowing and this purity are ignorance and false thought. When knowing is absent, the realm that is known is entirely emptied, and even this knowing itself is emptied out: when a person sees this, this is called awakening to the Path. The Zen master himself awakened from this, so later his Dharma-name was "Surangama Smasher."

Now let us discuss the work of cultivating realization. Previously I mentioned that this can be treated by dividing it into two aspects: the aspect of knowing and the aspect of feeling.

Which aspect should people who have already had realization start from in their cultivation of practice? Which aspect should people who have not entered the gate at all, and who have not had any experience of quiet sitting at all, start from in their cultivation of practice? The answer for both is that they should start from the aspect of knowing. People who have awakened to the Path still have to undergo this cultivation of practice, and seek further realization. People who have not yet awakened to the Path need even more to undergo this cultivation of practice, in order to seek true cultivation and genuine realization.

The question is: How should we cultivate realization? First of all, we must take this knowing, this sixth consciousness of ours, and provisionally make for ourselves a realm for it to take as an object, fabricate some thing or some realm that it can take hold of and grab onto.

Why do we call it a fabrication? In Yogacara Buddhist terms, it is an intentional act. (When we switch to another term, a thing may sound better, so when we study the Buddhist Path we must not be deceived by terms.) First we must perform an intentional act. An example is reciting the buddha-name. This phrase, the buddha-name

[Amitabha Buddha], is derived from an intentional act. Because Shakyamuni Buddha told us about this method, and after we heard it from him, we accepted this method. In our own consciousnesses we constructed a buddha-name. This is an intentional act. When people who practice Esoteric Buddhism chant mantras, these mantras are also intentional acts. The Esoteric Buddhist visualization practice is also an intentional act. In both cases the practitioners are creating an object to link up to. This is also true of the study of meditation sayings by the Zen people. Even when you completely reach the realm where past, present, and future are emptied out, it is the same. All of these practices are the sixth consciousness engaged in intentional acts. Within the sixth consciousness, you think this is pure, this is empty. Even the T'ien-t'ai practices of cessation and contemplation and counting the breaths, and the Bodhisattva Kuan-yin's Dharma Gate of hearing sounds, and so on—all these methods—if we sum them up, all belong to the category of "intentional acts" in the Yogacara schema of the five omnipresent activities.

In the T'ien-t'ai School, they speak of "provisionally establishing [an object to focus contemplation upon]." This is the "contemplation of provisional existence" within the three contemplations on emptiness, provisional existence, and the mean. Contemplation on provisional existence means provisionally establishing an object to focus on: originally this focal point is not there, but from within emptiness you give birth to being. Originally it is not there in your consciousness, but you provisionally establish something. This method of provisionally establishing an object to focus contemplation upon produces the eighty-four thousand Dharma Gates which Buddha spoke of.

For example, the Taoists cultivate the upper, middle, and lower fields of elixir. (Women must definitely not focus on the lower field of elixir. If they act intentionally on the lower field of elixir, this will produce problems, and they will be very serious. If women want to act intentionally on the body, they can only focus on the middle field of elixir, that is, from the chest upward.) This and other Taoist practices such as guarding the apertures, guarding the light, refining the *ch'i*, preserving thought, and so on are all intentional acts. They are all really included among the eighty-four thousand Dharma Gates. No matter which of these methods is involved, they all first require an intentional act.

There are some veteran practitioners in the audience who had a little bit of attainment and then turned back when they were halfway

there. In studying the Buddha Dharma, the very first is the very last, the most basic is the most profound, the first moment of the aspiration for enlightenment is the final moment of the aspiration for enlightenment. If we do not pay attention to this point, it often happens that after we have attained a little bit of mystical experience, or a bit of experiential understanding of truth, we lose what we had at the outset, and we cannot turn back and proceed dependably from the basic foundation. Thus there is a Buddhist saying: "If you leave home with your initial [aspiration for enlightenment], you have more than enough provisions to become a buddha." In the first moment of the aspiration for enlightenment, you say, "I want to leave home." If you spend several decades as a monk or nun always with the same degree of sincerity and earnestness that you had at the first moment of aspiration for enlightenment, then you will soon succeed. This is also true of cultivating practice. The basic foundation is in the intentional act: you must first find an object to focus on, and then intentionally act.

I often encourage people to follow the road of the method of reciting the buddha-name, and to cultivate according to the methods of cultivation in *The Sixteen Contemplations Sutra.* No matter whether you cultivate Zen, Pure Land, Esoteric Buddhism, or any other school of Buddhism, they are all the same. They all have just one Dharma Gate: cessation and contemplation, that is, concentration and wisdom. First you seek cessation, taking the sixth consciousness and tying it down to a single object until you find cessation. Thus, there are many people who feel they have awakened to this truth, and think they are correct. Frankly speaking, you should examine yourself, and see if your thinking has stopped or not. If it is all scattered in confusion, you must take the knowing of the sixth consciousness and tie it to a single object. You can provisionally establish this object for yourself. Then see whether or not you can achieve the cessation in which "one moment is ten thousand years and ten thousand years is one moment."

When you visualize Amitabha Buddha, or the Bodhisattva Kuan-yin, or any other enlightening being, if you cannot visualize them fully, you can visualize the bit of light in front of Buddha's face, or the round light at the top of his head, or the swastika [the Buddhist symbol for infinity] on his breast. First get a grasp on one point. This is provisionally establishing a focal point.

When we cultivate practice, how should we proceed? There are three steps.

The first is seat the body properly according to the posture of quiet sitting.

The second is to train yourself to take your conceptual consciousness and all your habitual thoughts and get rid of them, get rid of them until you are completely cleansed. (This is very simple to say, but very difficult to do.) It is all right whether or not you manage to get rid of them.

The third step is for your consciousness to construct something as a focal point. Of course it would be best to imagine an image of Buddha, or a point of light. Imagine something and set it before you or above you, and never let it move.

For example, imagine a pearl in front of you. When you have forgotten your body, all that will be in your consciousness is this one object. Suppose that when you imagine an image of Buddha, it suddenly strikes you: "Wow! Buddha is smiling at me," or "Buddha is rubbing my head." These are already second thoughts. You should just imagine a buddha, or visualize the solar disc, or visualize the light of a star. Let there be just one single object: "One moment, ten thousand years; ten thousand years, one moment." Only this is called attaining cessation, attaining *samadhi*. If you have not undergone this kind of cultivation of practice, then even if you can explain Buddhism as well as Shakyamuni Buddha himself, it is still useless. You will be no match for birth and death, and you will not be able to get free of cyclical existence. You will not be able to transcend the station of an ordinary person and enter into sagehood.

Visualization directed downward is also a reasonable method. If you say that visualization directed downward is not respectful, you are forgetting that there are buddhas in all ten directions and all three times. There are also buddhas in the downward direction. How can you say this is not respectful?

In *The Record of Laughing Zen*, there is a joke: A little child had to pee very badly, so he ran into a palace, and right in front of an image of the buddha, he pulled down his pants and peed. The monks got angry and scolded him, but he answered them very seriously: "There are buddhas in all ten directions and all three times, so where would you have me pee?" This joke contains a real truth, and indeed it is not a joke.

In the old days when I was studying the Path, I had a young monk friend who taught me a method belonging to the outside paths: the cultivation method of inert emptiness. The method is, on one hand to recite the buddha-name, and at the same time to visualize one's own body sinking further and further downward. Although this is a method of the outside paths, a non-Buddhist method, this method has saved many people with high blood pressure and many people on the verge of a nervous breakdown. When we do sitting meditation—this is especially true of people beyond middle age—instead of achieving what we aim for, we raise our blood pressure. This is because when we concentrate our minds, we are always going upward: this method can be employed as the antidote.

In those days I went to study all sorts of things. No matter whether teachers had the Path or not, I would go try to find out about them. In the course of this, I learned another method that is advantageous for people with high blood pressure, elderly people, sick people, and people with insomnia. You sit there without thinking of anything at all, and just focus your attention on the word "empty." You go on emptying out, fully relaxing your nerves and your brain. Some people use this method to cure problems with tension.

To summarize, no matter what road you follow, first you must set up an object to focus on. This is related to *The Surangama Sutra*'s concept of the body generated by will. After people who study Zen awaken to the Path, if they do not understand the body generated by will, it is useless. Having awakened to this realm of emptiness, if you do not know the work of cultivating practice, and you do not realize the body generated by will, you will not be able to make use of this empty true nature that you have awakened to at all. So you must find an object to focus on.

When people these days study Zen, in general, whether they sit for half an hour or an hour, they are always "holding to a feeling of peace and quiet within." This is the misguided Zen of silent illumination which the great Sung Dynasty Zen master Ta-hui criticized. Otherwise, they are doing quiet sitting with empty minds, and this is not even as good as inert emptiness. Thus, to have success in cultivating practice, you must have an object to focus on. This object to focus on pertains to the knowing part: it means taking the knowing of the sixth consciousness and linking it to a single point. If there are people of great capacity and great daring, they will follow this route and succeed. This is because in this object to focus on, the three forms of cessation and the T'ien-t'ai School's three forms of contemplation [correlated with the meditation perspectives of emptiness, provisional existence, and the mean] are all included.

First is giving birth to existence from within nothingness in a moment of mind. The contemplation is the contemplation of provisional existence, it is an intentional act. After this contemplation is achieved, after body and mind have been forgotten, then you empty out the focal object you yourself have constructed: this is "the contemplation of emptiness." That emptiness is not the emptiness we imagine right now in our conceptual consciousness, because the emptiness we imagine right now in our conceptual consciousness is inseparable from the emptiness constructed by our minds, by our mental states. When the contemplation of emptiness appears, it is the emptiness in which the myriad entangling objects are abandoned. Only this is real emptiness. After this, if we want emptiness, then there is emptiness, and if we want existence, then there is existence. We continue to overturn them both, and fuse both emptiness and existence. In Buddhist theory, this is called "the contemplation of the mean." It is called being capable of both true emptiness and wondrous existence. In terms of the cultivation of realization, this is the achievement of the three buddha-bodies, *dharmakaya, sambhogakaya,* and *nirmanakaya,* and infinite transformations. In sum, you must go through this process of cultivating practice.

But the question comes back. That student said that this initial knowing is created by the sixth consciousness, and is not the ultimate. We can say it another way: to know this knowing, without being attached to it—this is the ultimate. To say that this knowing is not the ultimate is relevant to Hinayana. To say that this knowing is the ultimate is relevant to Mahayana bodhisattvas. To say this knowing is equal to ignorance is relevant to ordinary people. To say that both knowing and not knowing have no location is relevant to great awakening, to true great enlightenment. Theory stops here.

Now let us return to our discussion of cessation. When we cultivate cessation, we must cultivate an object we link with: our consciousness creates something to focus on. For example, we may link with breathing. Why should we make mind and breath depend on each other? This is taking the breathing and making it into a focal point we take as an object to link with.

However, no matter what you link up with, a real question immediately arises. If your knowing is always pulled along by the thing you focus on, that is sensation, and you are being dragged along by the feelings engendered by the *skandha* of sensation. When we sit cross-legged, we are always contending with bodily sensations: our

midsections ache, our legs become numb. When we get to a higher level, we feel that this time we are pure and clean. This feeling of purity, too, develops at the level of sensations. Most of the time we are pulled around by sensations.

This is even more true for those who have read Taoist books or studied Esoteric Buddhism. As these people cultivate practice they are thinking: "Unh, the *ch'i* must flow through the spine," or "Ah, the *ch'i* has passed through the barrier of the 'gate of life' [alongside the seventh vertebra]." All of these are experiential realms created by the concerted action of the sixth consciousness and the temporal knowledge that develops. As you sit there meditating, you are very busy: you are holding internal research conferences on Taoism and Esoteric Buddhism. Then you must add footnotes, and add on your own deluded imaginings, and add more footnotes to your imaginings. And you think this is meditation work! If you're really talking about cultivating practice, you must be very strict in checking up on such states of mind in yourself. Every one of you must pay attention to this.

You must concentrate solidly on the object you link up to, and not be pulled away by the sensations of the *ch'i* channels. When your body reacts with physical sensations, don't pay attention to any of them. At this point you must rely on wisdom and become liberated from them. When you truly reach the point that you are not being controlled by these sensations, and you are able to pay no attention to these sensations, then the real energy channels come. Then the Taoist principle of refining vitality into energy and energy into spirit is the same as the Bodhisattva Maitreya's *Abhisamayalamkara Shastra.* Ordinary people have the four intensified practices of ordinary people, *shravakas* have the four intensified practices of *shravakas, pratyekas* have the four intensified practices of *pratyekas,* and bodhisattvas have the four intensified practices of bodhisattvas.

Thus the Taoists have a term, "returning the elixir through nine transformations." This is like chemical refining. You must pass through a nine stage refining process. However, nine is not a rigidly fixed number. Based on the *I Ching* concepts, nine is the highest number. It means to keep on refining and purifying again and again. To keep repeating it time and time again: this expresses the principle of this process of repeated refining. Our experiential realm of physical sensations is real, it is not false. But because people have read so many of these books, their thinking has been influenced by these

concepts. Because of this, they want to concentrate on an object of the realm of consciousness, but they cannot do it at all.

For example, when many people sit down to meditate, they intend to seek emptiness. As they sit and quiet down, as they are quietly sitting there, this knowing knows when their own false thoughts have come, knows when they are scattering in confusion, and knows when they are sinking into oblivion. When scattering and oblivion come, it knows. When there is neither scattering nor oblivion, it also must know. Always preserve this one. This is the realm for us to link up to and focus on. But we cannot do it.

When you sit there following the road of emptying the mind with quiet sitting, usually you are aware of this knowing, but what about purity? It seems to be pure, but when you sink into oblivion you are still sinking into oblivion, and your confusion and internal false thoughts are still going on. Though there are no big false thoughts, little false thoughts keep on coming and going, and you can never cut them off. So you may sit there for ten thousand years, but this is not cultivating practice, this is not cultivating the Path. This is no more than a method of quiet sitting for ordinary people to try to cultivate concentration. It does not count as cultivating practice. You must pay attention to this point.

There is a conclusion for people who have not accomplished anything by sitting in meditation. They have never reached complete concentration on the realm created by the intentional act of the sixth consciousness which they have taken as their focal object. Thus they cannot succeed even with the first step, and they cannot even reach the first *dhyana*.

Do not think that if you can do quiet sitting for several hours and have a bit of response from your energy channels that this counts as any kind of success. This is useless, it is unreliable. When you get to the barrier of birth and death, you are sure to feel regret, because you cannot rely on this. Anything that comes from relying on physiological factors is not the Path: when the physical capacities deteriorate, it will not be there anymore. If this Path relied on physiological factors, it would be materialistic. But the Path is absolutely mind-only. This is a very serious issue.

As I said earlier, when we are cultivating practice and doing meditation work, we must concentrate totally on the realm which you link up to as your focal object. This means there must be provisional conceptions in our mental states. Nevertheless, these provisional conceptions are also very troublesome, so I generally urge people not to

use provisional conceptions, but instead, when they sit down to meditate, to maintain their own spiritual illuminated awareness. This is because if you make use of provisional conceptions, it is easy to develop problems. (Above all, do not concentrate your attention on your lower field of elixir. If women do this, it is easy to bring about hemorrhages, and if men do it, it is easy to lose semen.) Provisional conceptions are often correlated with physical transformations, and produce many illusory realms.

Imaginary realms are realms of delusion: you may see some lights or hear some sounds or sense some tastes. Where do these illusory realms come from? People who study Buddhism must pay attention to this: you cannot fail to study the principles of the teaching. If you do not master the principles of the teaching, you are sure to follow the wrong road. In fact, all illusory realms are created by the concepts latent in the subconscious of our *alaya* consciousnesses, that we ourselves are not even aware of. Every person has different illusory realms, because every person brings along different seeds in his *alaya* consciousness.

There are people who see demons, and people who see ghosts. Some people give rise to illusory realms from sound. In reality, all of these are varieties of ghosts in our subconscious. It is very hard for us to check them out ourselves. What ordinary psychology calls the subconscious is in Yogacara terms part of the sixth consciousness. The seventh and eighth consciousness cannot be represented as the subconscious. People who really have *prajna* wisdom investigate illusory realms as soon as they appear, and realize that they come from within their own subconscious and nowhere else.

Thus we must read the Bodhisattva Nagarjuna's *Madhyamika Shastra:* "Phenomena are not born by themselves, nor are they born from others, nor are they born together with others, nor are they born without cause. Thus they are said to be unborn." For example, when we see an illusory realm, this illusory realm itself has no roots, and it cannot be born by itself. And it is certainly not the case that ghosts exist. If there is a ghost, there is a bodhisattva who has let us see it through a deliberate transformation. The illusory realm is not born together with other things: it is not something constructed by itself and other things acting together. And it is not born without a cause either.

Being born together refers to interdependent causation. The Buddha Dharma speaks of interdependent causation in many places. In *The Surangama Sutra* it says: "Fundamentally it is not interdependent causation, and it is not spontaneous nature." Phenomena are

not born by themselves: that is, they do not come about by some spontaneous force. Nor do they have some master outside them. The highest principle of the Buddha Dharma is that phenomena have no master, and are not spontaneous. These points all belong to the aspect of seeing truth, and are connected to cultivating practice.

I do not approve of people in general cultivating the methods of Taoism and Esoteric Buddhism that involve contrived actions. This is because in the present era, people's minds are already complicated enough. The afflictions of modern people are not the same as those of the people in antiquity when great peace prevailed in the world. In this evil world of the five corruptions, methods involving contrived actions easily lead to factors that are physically and psychologically corrupting, and very easily lead people into the barriers of delusion. Therefore, they are not as reliable as preserving the purity of spiritual illumination.

The purity of spiritual illumination is very easy. All you have to do is preserve it from the first when you sit down to meditate, and proceed like that. But this, too, is an object you link up with. You must always maintain this mindfulness, and not fall into oblivion or miscellaneous thoughts while you do so: just preserve this knowing. However, once you have this knowing, and you are aware of purity from mind-moment to mind-moment, and you maintain this knowing from mind-moment to mind-moment, this knowing becomes false thought.

The first instant of this knowing is right. If you go on keeping your attention on it, saying to yourself: "I must preserve this knowing," then you are overdoing it. Therefore, "When knowing is established, knowing is the root of ignorance. When knowing is absent, then seeing is nirvana." When we know this knowing is pure, after it is pure, we no longer pay attention to it, and it departs. Isn't this correct? If we still go on focusing our attention on this pure knowing, that is not correct.

After you preserve it in this manner, your physical being is sure to undergo a transformation. Speaking frankly, the step-by-step work of cultivating the practice of the four *dhyanas* and eight *samadhis* cannot be separated from this body. Speaking of the physical side, I already said before that there are some problems with studying Taoism and Esoteric Buddhism. There are some problems in studying Zen, but in turn, these are not problems. After you have understood the principle, the

opening of the *ch'i* channels will inevitably come. But if you want to seek *samadhi*, the first thing you must accomplish is to have no leaks.

Having no leaks has a broad meaning and a narrow meaning. The broad meaning is as follows. All day long we are leaking: our eyes see, our ears hear, all six sense faculties are leaking. In the evil world of the five corruptions, the corruption of the lives of modern people is the most terrible. Lao-tzu said something that was very true: "The five sounds make people's ears deaf, and the five colors make people's eyes blind." We are born into this era of sound and color, when sounds are brilliant, and neon lights are especially colorful, and television is particularly popular. The result is that more people are hard of hearing, and more people are near-sighted. Despite everything, it turns out it was better in the old days when there were just kerosene lamps with a single wick. When I was in seclusion on Mount O-mei for three years, I read the Buddhist canon by the light of a lamp with three wicks, and my teacher still said this was wasteful. These days, the more material civilization progresses, the more corrupt the corruption of life becomes, and the more problems there are.

Our six sense faculties are all leaking. But among the bodily leaks, the most serious is letting the elixir leak away. These days in America the issue of the concept of sex is very serious, but for now we will not discuss this. When it comes to the reason why we cannot attain *samadhi* when we cultivate the Path, it is because we cannot pass the test on the issue of sex, and so we cannot attain *samadhi*. *The Surangama Sutra* emphasizes again and again that if you want to attain *samadhi* without cutting off the root of lust, it is like "steaming sand to make rice." How can you succeed?

Someone asked this question: According to modern scientific physiology, when the male and female gametes reach a certain point, like other cells, the old must be replaced by the new. If they are not excreted, it interferes with the body.

Modern medical hygiene says this, but there is one point we must recognize. Nothing scientific is absolutely conclusive. Many scientific theories are accepted as true today, but overturned tomorrow. So we shouldn't have a blind superstitious faith in science and you should take this into account.

In *The Surangama Sutra*, volume 6, Buddha tells Ananda: "If you cultivate *samadhi* without cutting off lust, this is like wishing to make rice by steaming sand. Even after hundreds and thousands of eons, it

will only be hot sand. Why? Because this is not the basis for rice, and only sand will be the product." Therefore cultivating practice without cutting off the root of lust is like steaming sand to make rice.

What is the root of lust? In the past there was a monk in Hangchow who was a very famous Dharma teacher. People said that his root of lust had been cut off. When he saw women householders and nuns he would put his arms around them and hug them, and no one minded. This was because, in order to cultivate the Path, he had actually taken a knife and castrated himself. How could this be cutting off the root of lust? The root of lust does not refer to this [physical organ]. The root of lust is psychological. This monk was violating the precepts worse than anyone. Because he had cut off a part of his physical being, he acted wild like this, and all day long, by consorting with women, he was violating the precept against lust, against lustful ideas. So the root of lust means the consciousness.

After there are lustful desires in your consciousness, the results are all sorts of leakage of the elixir. Generally this leaking means a physical leakage of semen, whereas in fact, all six sense faculties are leaking.

You must completely cleanse away these lustful thoughts. Only then can you attain *samadhi*. Suppressing them is not cutting them off. To do as that monk did is not cutting them off either. In either case, the root of lust still remains. But to really cut off the root of lust, you must surely reach the fourth *dhyana*. Only then can you cut it off.

Thus, when all of you sit in meditation, from the top of your heads to your fingertips, not a single nerve in any sense organ attains bliss. This is because your vitality *(ching)* is not complete. It is connected to the fact that you have leaks. When we sit in meditation, our physical bodies cannot be comfortable, and our mental state cannot be pure, and we cannot focus our thoughts, and we cannot really attain *samadhi*. This is all because we have leaks.

Sometimes when we are sitting in meditation, we are very pure. This is because the six sense faculties have all been gathered in. If we reduce our leaks a little, naturally we improve a little. Gradually as we sit more, we will manage not to leak, and our physical beings will naturally undergo a transformation. We will necessarily go through the progression of energy channels related in my book *Tao and Longevity*.* This book only discusses the *tu-mai* channel, and does not

* *Tao and Longevity*, translated by Wen Kuan Chu, Ph.D. (York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, 1984). See especially pages 66-67.

discuss the *jen-mai* channel. The *jen-mai* channel is the autonomic part of the nervous system: it includes the internal organs. If you have opened the *jen-mai* channel, then the central *chung-mai* channel will also open. The *jen-mai* channel is harder to open than the *tu-mai* channel, but since hardly anyone reaches the first stage, I don't like to talk of the second.

However, when you really reach the stage where the *jen-mai* channel is transformed, it is as if the internal organs have switched places. If your perception of truth is not clear, this may scare you to death. But this is just the functioning of mind-only. In the Buddhist scriptures they talk about "the channels being freed and the mind being opened," and these things actually exist. When the mind's channels are opened, it is very hard to bear: it is like having a knife pressed against the pit of your stomach. But when they have opened it is really incomparably comfortable. When the stomach *ch'i* opens it is especially hard to endure: it's like having someone tear out your stomach, lungs, and liver all at once. When it has opened, it is as if the internal organs have all been exchanged for new ones. In other words, when the capacity of the heart, liver, spleen, lungs and kidneys slowly deteriorates, they are taken apart by you within yourself, and exchanged for a new set.

After the *jen-mai* channel is open, of course, the visualization which we have taken as an object is still in a state of *samadhi*. This realm of knowing *samadhi* has no connection to our physical transformations. Only at this point can we understand liberation.

Suppose that at this point, due to some sort of physiological transformations, we were to die on the spot. That spiritually illuminated knowing awareness of ours would itself be transformed, just as *The Heart Sutra* says: "aware that the five *skandhas* are all empty." There is nothing more to say. If we want to die, then we die. There's nothing special about this. All we have to do is preserve the realm of *samadhi*, and wait until the *jen-mai* channel opens up completely. Then we can reach the level of the real first *dhyana*.

Of course it is not that simple for the *jen-mai* channel to open. To cultivate this takes asceticism. The Taoists have a term, "burning cultivation." Those who cultivate it are called "smelting masters." It is actually like being smelted in a fire.

The opening of the *jen-mai* and *tu-mai* channels is similar to what Esoteric Buddhism calls the three channels and the seven chakras, but there are also differences. The three channels and the seven chakras belong to another discussion.

Our bodies are hanging here. They are superfluous. Our real true life is joined as one with this universe, this realm of reality, this great void: it exists forever. These bodies are only a third level reflection in this world of life.

The forms of cultivating practice that pertain to the aspect of sensation, the transformation of our physical bodies and the four elements, are a step-by-step work of solidifying and stabilizing. Take note! That knowledge that holds onto the realm it takes as an object never moves. Physiological transformations come spontaneously and continuously. Nevertheless, most people cannot pass these many tests. This is especially true of modern people, who become afraid if there is any hardship. For example, when your stomach shrivels up like a gunny sack, that feeling is really hard to stand. But at that time, the empty aware state of *samadhi* does not change, there is a transformation only at the physical level. This is the important point! If at that point the realm of *samadhi* weren't there anymore, then the energy channels would not be able to open, and the sickness would not be cured.

You will only be capable of liberation when you have separated the two, separated your physical state from your *samadhi*. If you mix the two together, you will never be able to eliminate birth, old age, sickness, and death. Pay attention to this! The realm of *samadhi* is still empty and aware: it has not changed.

If you are not empty from the stomach up, the throat chakra will not open. If the windpipe and the esophagus are not empty, even if you want to cut off false thoughts and afflictions, you will not be able to. Thus Esoteric Buddhism says that people who have really opened up the part from the throat chakra to the heart chakra are able to have no false thoughts. Because they can no longer arouse false thoughts, the physical and the psychological interact mutually as cause and effect.

Those who cultivate Taoism and the school of *yin* and *yang* all know this saying: "The four images and the five processes all depend on earth. The nine palaces and the eight trigrams are not separate from the *jen* water." Here the stomach is earth: that's why I'm always urging everyone to treat their stomachs properly. The so-called *jen* water means refining the vitality, and not letting the elixir leak away. Thus once the stomach [*mai*] is opened, that means the *ch'i* passes through the inner palace. At that point you can experience what Mencius meant when he said, "Filling it and making it real is called

beauty." This is also what is meant by the statement in the Image text of the *K'un* hexagram in the *I Ching*: "Centered in the yellow [earth], inner truth is comprehended." (The pattern in the flesh is the skin.) When the stomach *ch'i* goes through, then, as the *I Ching* passage continues to say: The superior person "lodges his essential body in the correct place." This is also what Mencius meant when he said, "The vast flooding *ch'i* fills everything between heaven and earth." This is a genuine experiential realm.

To summarize, the internal organs come within the scope of the *jen-mai* channel. You must exchange every one of their functions. Thus the Taoists speak of "Freeing the embryo and switching the bones." This saying is not a deception.

When all these energy channels are opened, only then can you experience the true meditative concentration of the first *dhyana*, the realm of the first *dhyana* on the Mahayana Path. All of you must cultivate practice properly, and not act at random.

In general those who speak of energy channels and meditation work are just doing so with a smattering of superficial knowledge, without a clear understanding of the system as a whole. They themselves have not managed to reach the level where they can do what is hard to do and endure the painful practices that are hard to endure. They can't pass the tests that arise. Since they have not practiced austerities, and they have not really done meditation work, the kind of cultivation practice they describe is just a few scattered, disjointed fragments. By such means you will never be able to succeed, you will never be able to realize the fruit of enlightenment.

14

CARRYING OUT VOWS

The basic principles of this series have been seeing truth, cultivating realization, and carrying out vows, and the main emphasis has been on the aspect of cultivating realization and doing meditation work. Until now, I have only said a few words about carrying out vows.

In fact, when all of us study Buddhism and cultivate the Path, we all want to experience the fruit of enlightenment. But why is it that so many people study Buddhism, and so rarely do we see people who are truly able to realize the fruit of enlightenment? The main reason is that most people do not carry out their vows sufficiently, not that their meditation work is inadequate.

If you do not carry out vows, then your perception of truth cannot be thorough and complete. Without the genuine carrying out of vows, your work of cultivating realization cannot progress. But it is this aspect of carrying out vows that is so easy for us to neglect. This is why all of you try hard but feel you are not getting on the right track.

Now let me explain by unifying the three aspects of seeing truth, cultivating realization, and carrying out vows. For example, there is a psychological question that is very obvious. Why do so many people in the world want to study the Buddhist Path? Even if they don't follow the road of studying Buddhism and seeking the Path, they still look for some other religious belief. Those people who do not seek religious belief search elsewhere for something to rely on. Fundamentally speaking, subconsciously, they all have something they are seeking. It is like doing business, and looking for the greatest result for the lowest price.

It is the same way with people who seek the supernatural protection of bodhisattvas. They spend a few dollars on bananas, and a few dollars on cakes, and a few dollars on incense—they spend at least a hundred dollars altogether on offerings. When they go to a temple, they burn incense, and bow their heads to the floor, and prostrate themselves. They ask for their husbands to be well, and their children to be healthy. Or they ask for promotions, or for wealth.

After they have finished asking for everything, they burn incense, and at the end they take their bananas home with them, and slowly eat them themselves.

How terrible this mentality of praying for gain is! It's the same way when a person who has made a mistake kneels there praying, and makes his confession. What kind of mentality is this? We must think this over for ourselves.

As for those of us who cultivate practice, in our minds we will surely be thinking: "I certainly do not have this kind of mentality." But the way I see it, it is all the same: it is only a different style. Though we do not have this mentality of praying for gain, nevertheless, we think that by sitting in meditation we will be able to attain enlightenment. Though we are not seeking with bananas, we are seeking with our crossed legs.

Everyone sits in meditation wanting to illuminate mind and see true nature, to achieve buddhahood and consummate the Path. What people like the most is meditation work and experiential states. All you have to do is hear that someone has the Path and has meditative accomplishments, and no matter what, you feel curious and go off to find him. You are not clear about what the Path and what meditation work ultimately mean: this means your perception of the truth is not pure. Why isn't your perception of truth pure? If we pursue this matter rigorously, it is because you do not correctly carry out your vows.

The foundation of the Buddha Dharma is built on the six planes of cyclical existence, on past, present, and future cause and effect. But based on what I know from several decades of experience, very few of the people who study the Buddhist Path really believe in the six planes of cyclical existence, and even fewer believe in past, present, and future cause and effect. Or at least they do not believe absolutely in these basic Buddhist teachings. These are not superstitious beliefs. No one understands it clearly in principle, and even fewer people seek and find realization of it in actual fact. All of you ought to reflect back within yourselves on these points.

Because you do not believe in the six planes of cyclical existence, and you do not believe in past, present, and future cause and effect, no matter whether you study Zen, or Esoteric Buddhism, or Pure Land, your basic foundation is wrong. It is like wanting to build a house on sand: it is impossible. But our mental activities are always going in this direction.

For example, when we study quiet sitting, when we sit we all want to empty out. Afterwards we are all there talking lofty words about Buddhist theory. Emptiness! Existence! *Prajna*! The Path is there everywhere as we talk about these Buddhist truths, but we have not investigated our own mental activity. Why do we want to seek emptiness? What comes after emptiness? Suppose we really empty out: what is it like then? The principles of the teaching explain all of this, but we have not studied them thoroughly.

Thus, for some people, even if they have cultivated their meditation work and their energy channels properly, it is still useless. So many people say that they have opened the special meridians and eight meridians, and the three channels and the seven chakras. But when you have opened them, then how are you? You say that you have opened the energy channels and you are capable of not dying. But there has never been a single person who has opened the energy channels who has not died. You say that a person who has opened the energy channels can die in a better way, but there are people who have not opened the energy channels who die very well. So then, what is the so-called opening of the energy channels for? We have not given this careful consideration, but anyway, when other people talk of opening the energy channels we follow along with what they say.

Another example are the spiritual powers. What are spiritual powers like? What is the power to know things in advance like? So many people who claim to have spiritual powers die of high blood pressure and diabetes. So what about an even bigger question? Have we given careful thought to what studying Buddhism and cultivating practice are ultimately for? We always indulge in high-flown talk, but it is not realistic.

In genuine cultivation of practice, in the end there is just one road: carrying out vows. So what does it mean to carry out vows? It means to correct your own mental conduct. Our thinking, the process of arousing mind and setting thoughts in motion: this is behavior that has not yet come forth. All conduct is the active expression of thoughts. When we want to seek emptiness, this is a matter of seeking a metaphysical issue, seeking the root source that can give birth to thinking. To really reach emptiness at the behavioral level and at the level of thinking is almost impossible. If someone manages to have his or her thinking entirely empty, and has become unknowing, then why would he or she have to cultivate the Path? Thus the principle of emptiness is not like this.

All of you sit in meditation and do your utmost to seek emptiness, but fundamentally you are making a huge mistake. You do not clearly recognize the principle of empty true nature. Earlier I mentioned *Seng-chao's Treatise* which was written by the Dharma teacher Seng-chao, the great disciple of the eminent early fifth century Buddhist translator and Dharma teacher Kumarajiva. This book is not easy to read. It collects together the essence of the Buddha Dharma, along with the thought of Lao-tzu, Chuang-tzu, Confucius, and Mencius. For example, Seng-chao wrote an essay called "*Prajna* Has No Knowledge." Every day we seek to achieve the great wisdom of *prajna*, but Seng-chao said that when wisdom achieves it highest point, it is without [any dualistic subject-object] knowledge. This is equivalent to what *The Heart Sutra* says: "There is no knowledge and no attainment." Seng-chao also said, in his essay "Things Do Not Move," that things do not come or go, that they are without movement or stillness, that there is no past and no future, only the present moment that is here before us. He also said, in his essay "Not Really Empty," that phenomena are both empty and yet not empty. This principle that joins metaphysical emptiness with actual behavior deserves much study.

When we work at sitting meditation, why can't we make progress? All of you are sure to think that it is because our method is incorrect, and do all you can to find an enlightened teacher to ask about methods. This is not it! Don't deceive yourselves. Why can't you advance in your meditation work? Why can't you attain *samadhi*? It is because your mental activity has not been transformed. If you have not changed your mental activity at all, your meditation work cannot progress, and your perception of truth cannot be complete. In Chinese civilization, no matter whether Confucian or Taoist, all teachings are united on this point, all agree on this view.

For example, people who study Taoism say that there are five kinds of studying the Tao and becoming an immortal (comparable to the paths of the five vehicles in Buddhism). There are ghost immortals, human immortals, earthly immortals, heavenly immortals, and spirit immortals (also called great golden immortals, corresponding to the great arhats). The Taoist view is: "If you only cultivate life and do not cultivate essence, this is the first sickness of cultivating practice." If you only cultivate the energy channels, and do physical cultivation work, and you think this is the Tao, this is the first great

defect in cultivating practice. The Taoists also say: "If you only cultivate the ancestral essence, and do not cultivate the elixir, for ten thousand eons it will be impossible for the *yin* spirit to enter sagehood." If people who study Buddhism only engage in lofty talk about theory, and they do not get a firm grasp of the root source of life, they will pass through ten thousand eons without being able to experience the realm of the sages. No matter how it is expressed, there is one basic principle: if you want to become an immortal, you will only succeed if you cultivate innumerable merits and innumerable virtuous practices.

What are virtuous practices? By Taoist standards, to rescue someone who is in imminent danger, and on the brink of death, and save his life, is just one virtuous practice. Using this as the standard, you must complete three thousand virtuous practices and accumulate several thousand merits, and only then will it be enough to cultivate and attain the station of the heavenly immortals. It is the same for Confuciansim and for Buddhism.

Buddhism requires us to transform completely the way we give rise to mind and set our thoughts in motion, our internal thinking and behavior. But based on what I know, not one of you has budged at all in your mental activity. This is very frightening. Why can't you realize the fruit of enlightenment? Because you have not untied your mental bonds. The bonds of the eighty-eight compulsions are strong and deeply rooted.

People who study Buddhism have one basic defect. All of you should reflect on this. First of all, because you study Buddhism, you look upon the human world as empty. Therefore you seek to leave it behind, to leap beyond it and pay no attention to it. Because you leap beyond it and pay no attention to it, you are incapable of compassion. We constantly speak of compassion. You should check into your own mental state and see how much compassion you are capable of. This is a very serious question. The second thing is this: to what extent have we eliminated greed, anger, ignorance, arrogance, and doubt?

Here is an example. The better all of us cultivate practice, the more quick-tempered we become. Why is this? You sit in meditation and are sitting very comfortably. If someone comes and bothers you, don't you get angry? Isn't this sort of mental functioning the opposite of compassion?

There are also people who do their meditation work well enough, but no matter how good their realm of quietude is, when they leave

the meditation seat, all their behavior is totally opposite to that realm of quietude. They can explain the theory correctly, but what they do is totally opposed to it.

Therefore, Buddhism requires us first to set to work from the precepts of discipline. The Hinayana precepts of discipline are passive: all they do is prevent mistakes in one's own behavior. This is the basic principle of the Hinayana precepts. Mahayana bodhisattvas must actively nurture the roots of goodness. Only such behavior is the basis of the Mahayana bodhisattvas' code of discipline. But if we cannot even accomplish the passive form of discipline, we certainly cannot speak of the bodhisattvas' active form.

No matter whether you are householders or monks and nuns, all of you must pay attention to the road of studying Buddhism and cultivating practice you follow after this. You must pay attention to the yoga stages of the *shravaka* vehicle analyzed in *The Yogacarabhumi Shastra*. This contains the basic theories of all four schools of Esoteric Buddhism, and it tells us all about the basic principles of cultivating the energy channels and cultivating cessation and contemplation. I bring this up in passing.

For example, we know that to study the *shravaka* path, we must learn the eight prohibitions against killing, robbery, lust, lying, alcohol, cosmetics, singing and dancing and watching singing and dancing, sitting or sleeping on a high or broad bed or seat. One of these precepts says: "Monks are not permitted to sit on a high or broad bench." Why is this? A high broad bench is a mark of high status. Why can't a monk sit there? First he must develop the virtue of humility. This precept tells you never to be full of pride. When you act selfishly, you sit higher up looking like something special. So this precept requires us to learn humility. When we read this precept, no matter whether we are householders or monks and nuns, first we reflect back on ourselves and see whether or not we have humility, whether or not we have achieved humility.

To my knowledge, generally people who have studied Buddhism or people who believe in any other religion are more arrogant than anyone in the world. They think that other people are devils who have no faith, and they think they themselves are sages. We who study Buddhism make the same mistake, only we call it by another name. When we see someone outside the Path we feel: "Alas! How pitiful! These are the seeds of hell!" The same principle is involved here: we are unwilling to be humble.

This is especially true of people who have done a bit of meditation work. All they have to do is study Buddhism and do sitting meditation for three days, and already the attitude that "In heaven and on earth, I alone am the honored one" arises. They think that other people's meditation does not work. They specialize in measuring other people by the standards of a sage, but they themselves have arbitrarily set this standard: things are the size they say they are. Of course when they measure other people, none of them are sages. But they never measure themselves to see how long they are or how big they are. They never reflect back on themselves: this is what's most terrible.

What can be done about such mental behavior? Why can't they realize the fruit of enlightenment? Why can't they attain *samadhi*? Because they have not transformed this mental behavior one little bit, they have not transformed greed, anger, ignorance, arrogance, and doubt at all. This is very frightening. When we reflect on it, it is very serious.

I emphasize over and over again to everyone that if you cultivate the Path without realizing the fruit of enlightenment and you are unable to experience emptiness, this is because you have not been able to transform your mental activity. Thus, when you sit and meditate, you are only holding onto a bit of emptiness created by the realm of consciousness, and you think that is the Path.

Today one of our fellow students has reported that yesterday, when he was sitting in meditation very well, suddenly he discovered that his hands had reached out and clutched his face. At that moment he thought: "This is very strange. How is it that a second ago I did not know that my hands were clutching my face? Am I not doing the work well?" At the time he felt he was having a hard time, and he regretted that he had not noticed anything. He had been unmindful: he had done something without knowing it himself. Being heedless has its result. If you say you are heedless, what you attain in the future will also be an unintended result. For example, sometimes we are hit by someone inexplicably: this, too, is an unintended result. This student continued sitting in meditation, and later discovered again that he was clutching his face. He said that this is called "ignorance" in the sense of being heedless.

However, this is also a case of "only knowing one, but not knowing two." Generally when we talk of emptying this moment of mind, this is the minimum, the most elementary point. It is just a method of enticement, to lead us on to the first step of the road to succeeding and

achieving sagehood. But at the same moment, at the same instant, this moment of mind can initiate many functions. Thus, when we really become quiet, when the six sense faculties are all functioning at the same time, and the myriad entangling objects all come, if we can recognize all the myriad objects, this is what the Sixth Patriarch was talking about when he said: "How could one expect that inherent nature can give birth to the myriad phenomena?" It is not that we only cultivate emptiness. To succeed, we must be able to have complete knowledge.

When you are pure and focused, you can still use your hand to scratch an itch, your teeth are chewing, and your feet are tapping at the same time. These are all the functioning of a moment of mind. You cannot say: "At this point my mind is empty, and scratching an itch is not in the category of a moment of mind." You must realize that the response of your basic capability is a moment of mind: that is a moment of mind of the *alaya* consciousness. Thus there are many people who encounter many demonic realms when they sit in meditation and cultivate the Path. In reality these demons are their own creations. Not only this, but many people who are attached to demons subconsciously like to play around with these things. In other words, at the level of mental activity, fundamentally they have not been transformed.

So I always tell students that among the sixty-four hexagrams of the *I Ching*, there is not one that is entirely good, and not one that is entirely bad. There is bad in the good and good in the bad. There is only one hexagram which may be reckoned to have all its lines auspicious, and that is the hexagram "Humility." So when Buddhism tells us to study emptiness, the first precept is that we must be humble. How many people can do this? Reflect back yourselves: who is humble?

Only if you can truly achieve humility will you be capable of the compassion of the bodhisattvas. The Taoist Lao-tzu said: "I have three treasures: humility, frugality, and not presuming to take precedence in the world." Not presuming to take precedence in the world is humility. It's the same way in Buddhism. To what extent does Buddhism take humility? It extends humility to selflessness. When humility reaches its ultimate point, this is selflessness.

Therefore, if we only want to sit in meditation and reach emptiness, and we cannot achieve selflessness at the level of mental activity, then we cannot become empty. This is because as we sit there preserving emptiness, it is the self that is trying to preserve emptiness, and

we have not achieved selfless emptiness. If there is no self, what's the need to seek emptiness? Selflessness is already empty.

So in terms of carrying out vows, the practice of carrying them out is just a matter of genuinely seeing truth. If you cannot carry them out, your perception of truth is useless. You must reach this point where you see truth and are able to carry out vows: only then can you talk of true compassion, because true compassion is selfless. In reality, what we generally talk of as compassion belongs in the category of sentiment, not wisdom. The compassion of the Mahayana Path is wisdom, it is the compassion of *prajna*. That's why true compassion is only possible by means of selflessness. If we say "I must be compassionate to you," we have already fallen into the lower vehicles. For example, the benevolence of parents loving their children, especially maternal love, does not demand a price. This is the love between parents and children of the ordinary human path, but it is still "sentiment." This sentiment is generated from the self loving others. A bodhisattva's compassion is wisdom. Wisdom is generated from selfless love. This is indeed very important.

Thus, to speak of the crucial point in carrying out vows and the gate of practice, we must examine ourselves at all times in our quiet concentration. What is a person who cultivates practice? It is a person who is always examining himself rigorously. So you must not think that because you have some method of practice, some energy work *(ch'i-kung)*, some way of cultivating the three channels and the seven chakras, or because you chant mantras, that some day later on your spirit will be free. Those methods have nothing to do with it. We see how many people who study the Buddhist Path are mentally abnormal. Why are they defiled? Why is there so much abnormality? Because they have not been strict in their cultivation of practice. In other words, they have not rigorously reflected back and examined themselves.

Take for example the three poisons: greed, anger, and ignorance. You tell me: At what point are we not greedy? If you say you are not greedy at all, but all day long you want to be with me, you want to be with your teacher, isn't this greed? But there is nothing I can give you. Because you are greedy, you hope that your teacher may have something there that he can dig out for you. What kind of mentality is this? Why don't you go do your own work? In the past when I was studying with my teacher Mr. Yuan, it was not me who asked the teacher questions, it was always the teacher who was questioning me.

For example, one time the two of us went from Chengtu to Chungking. At that time facilities for travel were not very developed, and when the two of us reached Neichiang, we were very tired. During the war of resistance against Japan, when you took the bus you had to stand up. We had been standing all day long, and when we came to the inn in Neichiang, my teacher Mr. Yuan asked: "Are you tired or not?" I said: "Of course I am tired." He asked: "How is your mental state right now?" I answered: "It's the same as when I was in seclusion on the mountain." It was really the same. I was not moving: it was just as the verse describes:

The swirling mist pours down
    from the mountains but is always still
The rivers rush along side by side
    but do not flow.

I did not feel any moving or shaking, and I did not feel the pain of being worn out by the long journey. But at that moment I felt that I was a little bit tired, and this was not right. My teacher Mr. Yuan said: "So! This is really not easy!" I answered: "It will probably take another year until I can resolve this question."

Everyone likes to ask questions, no matter how big or small they are. When we examine our own mental states, we must cut off greed, anger, ignorance, arrogance, and doubt. This is by no means easy! You say that when you sit in meditation you can empty out, but this is useless. You cannot get through situations, you cannot get through when mental events arise, and when anger comes you get angrier than anyone.

What is the angry mind? To blame heaven and resent people is anger, it is the root of anger. To be dissatisfied with your environment and everything in it, to feel a bit of dissatisfaction and maintain it—this is the beginning of the angry mind.

As for ignorance, there's no need to talk about it. Let me quote a poem by my teacher Mr. Yuan:

Karmic consciousness rushes on
When does it reach the village gate?
The five *skandhas* are obviously illusions
Ignorance is everywhere amidst entangling objects.

You see that everyone who studies Buddhism knows how to talk about emptiness. But they all have ignorance in their mental states and in their emotions, ignorance about gain and loss, ignorance about life, ignorance about everything. Obviously, they have no wisdom! Where can the root of this be discovered? If it is not evident in their behavior, it is all apparent in their dreams. The fact that they can behave this way in their dreams is because they are always in the midst of greed, anger, and ignorance.

If you cannot transform your behavior, it will be impossible for you to transform your energy channels. But if you think that by transforming your energy channels you attain the Path, that's preposterous. I have heard so many people say that they have opened their energy channels, but now they have all gone into the vast darkness.

So if all of you have not done anything about your mental activity and carrying out your vows, don't talk about the four *dhyanas* and the eight *samadhis*, and don't say anything about realizing the fruit of enlightenment!

Frankly speaking, if a person truly performs a virtuous act, then if he sits cross-legged in meditation that day and observes, he sees that suddenly it is not the same anymore: immediately his energy channels are different, and his mental state is enlarged. This is something that you can absolutely not deceive yourself about. It is absolutely true!

Don't talk about genuine virtuous conduct, or virtuous states of mind internally. If you do manage today to resolve the problems of greed, anger, ignorance, arrogance, and doubt a little bit, then the realm you experience will be a little bit different. So when we sit in meditation and cannot empty out, when we cannot empty our minds, then we should look and see where the root of our sickness today is located, and see why we cannot empty out as we sit in meditation today. While your mind entertains states of greed, anger, ignorance, arrogance, and doubt, there is sure to be something hanging you up there. This is a question of the *alaya* consciousness, not the sixth consciousness. If you do not investigate this, and just sit in meditation seeking a bit of emptiness, a bit of meditative accomplishment, it will be useless. In that case I urge you not to study the Path, or you may harm yourself.

Therefore you must pay special attention to the aspect of mental activity. This means practice or conduct. I still haven't talked about

vows. When it comes to people who vow to save others and rescue the world, who are able to act out of concern for other people, who can sacrifice themselves at every occasion, in my view, no one can do this, no one can do this at all. So you may want to realize the fruit of enlightenment, but there is no such thing.

In our study materials, the relationship between the eighty-eight bonds and compulsions and the three realms of desire, form, and formlessness is laid out very clearly in front of you. When you have untied a certain number of these bonds, then you attain a certain station as a result. These tests are all placed before you. Don't think that if you can sit cross-legged for an hour you will ascend to some heaven, or that if you can do it for an hour and a half you will ascend to some other heaven—there's no such thing. You cannot rely on your legs. In cultivating practice what is cultivated is mental activity, not the legs.

Buddhism tells us to eliminate afflictions. The Buddhist translation of the Sanskrit word for "affliction," *klesa*, into Chinese as *fan-nao* is excellent. If we study this in terms of ordinary learning, affliction is a basic state of our mental activities. *Fan* means annoying; *nao* means troublesome. This is what affliction is. Affliction is wrongdoing, wrongdoing that defiles your own mental state. In terms of the basic essence above form, our inherent nature is fundamentally pure. Because of the behavior linked to and engendered by affliction, it becomes temporal wrongdoing. For example, when someone kills someone else, this is because of the element of fire [which is associated with anger]. But fundamentally it begins from a bit of affliction. At the individual level, murder is the greatest crime. In terms of the outer world, when it keeps on developing, after a time it becomes a great crime that can harm society, harm the nation, harm the human race, and harm the whole world. So we must not underestimate affliction and see it as something minor.

Regarding the aspect of carrying out vows, we must make the mental activities by which we carry them out pure and empty. If we want to attain *samadhi*, if we want to illuminate mind and see true nature, we must examine ourselves at all time wherever we are and ask ourselves if the slightest bit of affliction is present or not. If there is any affliction present, it is very serious.

There is one kind of affliction that comes from our physical being, that is induced by physiological imbalances. This is what the Confucians call the physical energy nature. Thus, in cultivating the

Path we must transform the energy channels; that is, we must transform our physical energy nature. Physical energy is a real issue, it is not an empty theory.

Why can a person who cultivates the Path whose meditation work is good improve his complexion and open his energy channels? Because he is influenced by his mental activity, and his physical energy is being transformed. Every cell is being transformed—this is true. That's why affliction can be transformed into enlightenment, can be transformed into awakened true nature that is pure and illuminated at all times.

Everyone of us, especially those who study Buddhism, are always in the midst of affliction. If we turn around and examine it, out of the twenty-four hours of the day, how many seconds are our bodies and minds both happy? Of course strictly speaking, temporal happiness is just one kind of affliction. In *The Vimalakirti Sutra* it says: "Affliction *is* enlightenment." That means that if you can transform affliction, then it is enlightenment. Under the impetus of affliction, we develop awakening. We discover that we are afflicted, and that this is really not correct, and we immediately become alert. This kind of transformation is in itself enlightenment.

However, our affliction is not enlightenment, because we are always revolving along with affliction without knowing it. For example, just now one of our fellow students said that when he is sitting in meditation, his legs get numb: his physical being is not well, and affliction comes. The most important component of this affliction is of course the physiological influence. Therefore, you can only be counted as having the basis for cultivating the Path and attaining *samadhi* when your physical state is completely transformed and changed into a state of absolute purity. That's why the energy *(ch'i)* channels are very important for this aspect.

The energy channels are also positively related to mental activity. The more good you do, the better your thoughts become even if this is a passive good and is not conduct that benefits other people. Still, if you can first get rid of the afflictions in your own mind, though this is doing good only for yourself, if you can act like this to some degree, then you will be able to transform your energy channels somewhat, and your *samadhi* power will naturally increase somewhat.

So then, when we sit in meditation, why is it that we cannot quiet down? If we investigate, we see that it is because of affliction. Within affliction are hidden many, many seeds of wrongdoings. Many

elements of wrongdoing all come from affliction. If we transform and eliminate affliction, and have totally purified ourselves of it, at this point our mental state is comparatively pure and illuminated. Only after this are we capable of examining our own thoughts as they arise and disappear.

For example, as we sit there meditating, we feel that our mental state is very pure. This is a realm of consciousness. But you should know that when we are in this instant of purity, so many wrongdoings and afflictions are hidden away there. Can you find them? Suppose someone boasts that while he is in this mental moment of purity, he has absolutely no afflictions and absolutely no trace of wrongdoing. In that case, this person should not be talking about cultivating practice: fundamentally he does not see the truth! When we are in this mental moment of purity, the roots of afflictions and wrongdoings are still there, more than eight-four thousand of them. This is a hypothetical number, a metaphor for very, very many. Buddha said: "In a moment of thought there are eighty-four thousand afflictions." Thus there are eighty-four thousand methods to deal with these afflictions.

A little while ago one of our fellow students asked: "Why is it that when I reach the realm of emptiness, or the realm of empty spiritual awareness arrives, I become afraid? I really get very scared. This is indeed strange." We can discuss this question by dividing it into several points.

The first point is this. Buddha says that when people who have fallen low for a long time see empty true nature, they laugh out loud, and feel delighted beyond compare. When people who have not fallen as seriously see empty true nature, they may feel fear, and cry.

The second point is another explanation for this. Concerning people who do not arouse a mental state of fear when they see empty true nature, *The Diamond Sutra* says: "You must realize that these people have planted the roots of goodness with one, two, three, four, or five buddhas: they have already planted the roots of goodness in countless thousands of buddha-lands." People who study Buddhism seek emptiness day after day, but when true emptiness arrives, people with shallow roots of goodness become afraid. They have no way to face reality, no way to accept this emptiness. Where does the cause for this lie? It is because of clingings and attachments. Because of them, from the time they are born, people all want to grab hold of something. When you suddenly arrive at the realm of emptiness, and there is nothing for you to grab hold of, you get scared. This is the psychology of people in general, so naturally they become afraid when they encounter emptiness.

The third point is this. When the realm of emptiness arrives, suddenly you feel fearful. This means that fear is already present in your mind that has not been emptied out. It means that fear moves in and occupies your mind. This is because our habitual clinging likes to grab hold of things, so it grabs hold of this fear.

This thing fear has such complicated psychological factors. Isn't it true that when we are in a moment of emptiness, we are still concealing many afflictions and many wrongdoings? Have we examined ourselves and searched them out? This all seems like empty theory when it comes to cultivating practice, but actually it is very real. This is especially true for our younger fellow students. When they close their eyes, they feel there is a bit of purity, and they think that this is emptiness. But what they cannot empty out is also part of their mental state. That is to say, when we are sitting in meditation, when we close our eyes, our brains enter into a semi-resting state. We are not fully asleep, and our optic nerves are not completely at rest. All that is happening is that subconsciously we feel empty and vacant: at the level of subconscious memories and habits, a scene resembling emptiness appears. But in front of this scene it is still dark and vague. Afterward, we busy ourselves with philosophy here, and play around with meditation sayings, and then we feel that we understand everything, and we think that we have "smashed through the triple barrier with a single arrow"! This is one point.

A second point is this. When you have nurtured your spirit a bit, you get more moody. This is particularly true for young people. This first barrier arrives, the barrier of sentiments and desires. That is, sexual desire gets stronger. You must not deceive yourself on this point. If you do not do your meditation work properly, there is nothing to say because it doesn't happen. But if you do your meditation work well, thoughts of sexual desire will come to you, and physical pressure in particular will arise. What are the basic causes of this? Greed, anger, and ignorance. Desire, the first form of fundamental ignorance, immediately flares up. Unless this comes, it is impossible to open up the energy channels. After it comes, desirous thoughts arise along with it. In the midst of this, what should you do about mental activity, about the gate of practice? What method can you use to remedy it? How can you deal with it? Where does its basic reason lie? Ultimately, where does the

root of this sickness come from? Is the mental provoking the physical, or is the physical provoking the mental? There is a crucial issue here.

If older people think that they do not have this problem, it is because they have gotten old and feeble. But if you want to take the sun setting in the west and return it to the east, if you really can accomplish the process of rejuvenation, then you may still encounter this first barrier because this is fundamental ignorance.

Thus everyone of us must pay special attention to the eighty-eight bonds and compulsions. Of the fifty-one mental states in the Yogacara *Treatise on the Gate for Illuminating the Hundred Phenomena*, which ones are fundamental afflictions? Which ones are accompanying afflictions? Which are afflictions that go with sleep? In translating this treatise, the term "accompanying afflictions" was used very well. These afflictions wrap themselves around you, follow you around, and put you into a state of sleep and befuddlement so that you, yourself, cannot examine them, and are misled and confused by them. In fact, these are your own barriers of delusion.

As you investigate the eighty-eight bonds and afflictions layer by layer, you can get rid of several layers of them. Your work of meditative concentration can surely reach that point. According to the usual account of the Dharma, abiding in mindfulness is the first *dhyana*. This is the ordinary explanation. But the real first stage of the fruit, called "entering the stream of enlightenment," is not like this. Therefore, even if you attain the first *dhyana*, you will not necessarily realize the first fruit. This is because the criterion for the first fruit is based on the eighty-eight bonds and compulsions. The proof that you have reached the stage of the first fruit is if you can do away with the many layers of greed, anger, ignorance, arrogance, and doubt, the roots of wrongdoings and afflictions in your subconscious.

To attain enlightenment we must master the principles of the teaching. We must not just sit in meditation, holding onto a meditation saying: it just won't work. So when another person asks me about Zen, I tell him: I have some "cake." If you have something good to eat there with you, then I'll come. How could it be so simple as being given Zen by someone else? It is not easy. When you manage to abide in mindfulness, you must observe what mindfulness you are abiding in. Abiding in mindfulness in oblivion is also a form of abiding, but it is useless. If you do not transform your physical energy, if you do not transform your mental activity, it is useless.

The next point is this. Even if you can reach the stage where your *ch'i* stops, and your breathing stops, this is at least the second *dhyana*,

but it is not necessarily the second fruit of the Path [called "once-returning" because you only have to be reborn once more in cyclical existence]. By simply stopping the *ch'i*, you cannot realize the stage of the second fruit. Stopping the *ch'i* can be accomplished by using the will to control it, and this has nothing to do with the Path. What's more, after the *ch'i* is stopped, all you have to do is provoke it, and it comes forth in an outburst of temper bigger than anything. Thus cultivating practice is not like this, so do not misunderstand. If you think that when you have stopped your *ch'i*, you have meditative accomplishment and you have the Path, what kind of path is sold so cheaply? Only a useless kind. The key lies in mental conduct.

After you have reached the second *dhyana*, after your *ch'i* has stopped, at the same time you must investigate the eighty-eight bonds and compulsions. How many of the mind's wrongdoings and afflictions have you gotten rid of? How much of the bad karma of body, mouth, and mind have you gotten rid of? Thus, there are a lot of people who are always talking about meditation work all day long, but they have not transformed the karma of body, mouth, and mind one bit. You must not deceive yourself about this.

Many yogis in India are able to stop the energy channels. They can be buried underground and not die. All these things can be developed by the proper training. All this means is that our physiological functions can be trained and made to assume various configurations. This is accomplished by mind-only. But if we ask if this is the Path, the answer is that it is not.

As for the third fruit [called "non-returning"] and the fourth fruit [arhatship], and all the fruits of the Path, you can consult a list of the eighty-eight bonds and compulsions. You must examine yourself everyday, and see to what extent you have removed states of affliction and wrongdoing from your mental activity. You should investigate how many virtuous acts you have performed each day. This is why the Confucians in the old days kept ledgers of their merits and faults, and marked them in red, in order to keep track of their mental activities.

When your meditation work reaches the stage that the *ch'i* stops and the energy channels stop, it shows the capacity of the true nature of mind, and proves that the capabilities created by mind-only can really achieve this level of meditative accomplishment and spiritual powers and so on. It is not certain, however, that this means realizing the Path, or experiencing true empty nature. Realizing the three buddha-bodies, the *dharmakaya*, *sambhogakaya*, and *nirmanakaya*, is even harder.

Achieving these three buddha-bodies is what the Zen School called the triple barrier. Only when you have really passed through the triple barrier can you achieve the three buddha-bodies. Even though they talked of emptiness and existence, did the Zen masters (like Hsueh-tou Ch'in whom I mentioned before, whose path must be called lofty), or many other people achieve the three buddha-bodies? We cannot know.

Achieving the three buddha-bodies can be accomplished in the present life. First, transform your physical energy. Start from virtuous conduct, and add to this the meditation work of the four *dhyanas* and the eight *samadhis*. Then you will have some hope. We have committed ourselves to this for several decades, and we are still at the stage of trying to find realization. You have no meditative accomplishments, and no cultivation. Before you have reached the level of absolutely seeking realization, you should not set limits for yourself as you please, or settle on any fixed definitions: if you do, you will go wrong.

Now the foregoing refers to practice, but what about vows? That is even harder to talk about. If you cannot carry out your vows, you cannot manage to see truth. To put it another way, if you cannot carry out your vows, then you cannot succeed in the work of cultivating realization. What's the use of sitting well? You may say: "When I sit in meditation, I can sit for three hours, and my mind becomes very pure." But really you are sitting there being lazy. This can be called a form of what is described in the play on words in classical Chinese: "The Tao means stealing [*tao*]." The meaning of this saying from *The Yin Convergence Scripture* is that people make use of the essence of heaven and earth, and borrow the original capacity of life, in order to be able to cultivate themselves and achieve the Path. Once people are born, they steal food and air from heaven and earth. They sit in meditation at all hours of the day and night, wanting to imbibe the correct energy of heaven and earth, and the refined essence of the sun and moon. How terrible this thievery is! But *The Yin Convergence Scripture* is encouraging us to be thieves. If we really steal certain things from the universe, then our lives will be perfected: our lives will be the universe. After you do this, then you can let other people steal from you. This is the Taoist viewpoint.

The thought of the classical Chinese philosopher Mo-tzu [fl. fourth century B.C.] came out of Taoism. Mo-tzu demanded that we "sacrifice ourselves to benefit the whole world." This is equivalent to the Buddhist spirit of great mercy and compassion. Self-sacrifice is the philosophy of Mo-tzu. Mo-tzu is a figure in the Taoist classic *Biographies of the Spirit Immortals*, where it says that Mo-tzu was still in the world during the time of Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty [who reigned 140-87 B.C.]. But who still saw him then?

Yang Zhu [c. fourth century B.C.], another classical Chinese philosopher, advocated the primacy of absolute individualism and self interest. His philosophy, which resembles classical 19th century liberalism, also came out of Taoism.

Now let us return to the main topic. We who study Buddhism are there sitting in meditation stealing, while at the same time, out in society so many people are busy on our behalf. For this reason the Buddhists have a saying which is very special, a saying that is recited every morning and evening: "To those above we repay the four major forms of benevolence. Below we help those beings suffering in the three mires." This is a vow. Every day it alerts us to do meritorious deeds. We who study Buddhism must examine ourselves at all times wherever we are to see if we are fulfilling this vow. Every day we must repay the four major forms of benevolence. We are indebted to all four forms of benevolence: the benevolence of the buddhas, the benevolence of our parents, the benevolence of the nation, and the benevolence of sentient beings.

What is the benevolence that sentient beings show toward us? A person lives in the world, and depends on the fruits of the labor of many people. This is why we must repay the four forms of benevolence. To live for one day, we must trouble many people to provide us with the necessities of life. This is really the way it is.

"Below we help those beings suffering in the three mires," means that at the same time we must be mindful of the sufferings of those in the three lower planes of existence—animals, those in hell, and hungry ghosts. In other words, we must be mindful at all times of the sufferings of those who are not like us humans, and we must think of ways to help them. But do we do this or not? We who study Buddhism only think of how to find for ourselves companions who have the wealth of the Dharma, so they can help us achieve the Path. This kind of motivation is the basis of selfishness. Why don't you first help someone else achieve the Path? So first I spoke of practice, and then I spoke of vows. Have you really taken vows or not? Think it over.

Consider the classic Mahayana vows: "I vow to deliver infinite numbers of sentient beings. I vow to cut off endless afflictions. I vow

to study innumerable Dharma Gates. I vow to achieve the supreme Path of the buddhas." In reality, while we are chanting sutras, we chant through these vows, and that's the end of it. There are actually no such things in our minds. The first vow is to save infinite numbers of sentient beings, but all we want to do is save ourselves. The second vow is to cut off endless afflictions, but we think: "It would be best if you helped me cut them off." The third vow is to study innumerable Dharma Gates, but we think: "You teach me, and it will be fine." The fourth vow is to achieve the supreme Path of the buddhas, but we think: "One day in the future I may succeed." Usually this is the way we interpret these four vows. Just reflect back, and you will see how serious this is. This is why it is said that the gate of practice is very hard.

The whole Buddhist canon tells us about the practice of carrying out vows. Practice means the thirty-seven components of the Path and the myriad practices of the six perfections. The foundation for studying Buddhism is here. When you understand past, present, and future cause and effect, and the six planes of cyclical existence, and you improve yourself at the level of mental activity, gradually you will naturally advance in your meditation work and your perception of truth. In saying this I am not just repeating the Buddhist teaching: this has been my personal experience. If you do not start your work from here, it is an insoluble problem, and you will not be able to realize the fruit of enlightenment. Changing your mental activity is much more important than sitting in meditation or cultivating realization. All you have to do is correct your mental activity for one day, and your *samadhi* power and your sitting meditation will improve along with it for that day.

Why can't you attain *samadhi*? Why can't you even sit in meditation steadily? Go look for the answer in your mental activity, not in your meditation work. If you look for the answer to this in your meditation work, it will be in vain. It may be possible to find the answer by chance, but after a few days you will lose it. Sitting cross-legged in meditation does not have an absolute connection to *samadhi*. When you are sitting there, can you or can you not transform your body and mind? This is the question. In reality, it certainly is not a matter of the posture in which you sit. You must examine yourself at the level of mental activity. Only this is the ultimate. Only then can you speak of *samadhi*.

This is the important point in today's concluding talk. This series of lectures has had as its three guiding principles: seeing truth,

cultivating realization, and carrying out vows. Here at the end I emphasize one thing: carrying out vows is the most important and carrying out vows means to inspect and change your behavior. Your perception of truth will be complete, and you will be able to realize the fruit of enlightenment through the work of cultivation only if you can carry out your vows. So many of the ancients realized the fruit of enlightenment because they carried out their vows.

Nowadays the biography of Milarepa is very popular and everyone admires him very much. But can you pattern yourself after Milarepa? You cannot. Milarepa's teacher deliberately made him suffer so much. Many times he made Milarepa build a building and then tear it down, until his back was all rubbed raw and running with blood and pus. But Milarepa did not resent his teacher. Every day you want your teacher to pass on a secret teaching, but if your teacher opens his mouth to scold you a little, then you want to revile him. How will you ever get anywhere with this kind of mental activity?

We all want to be Zen masters, we all want to be the Sixth Patriarch. When the Sixth Patriarch went to the Fifth Patriarch's place to seek the Dharma, the Fifth Patriarch had him pounding rice for three years. We do not have to pound rice, but we act as if our teacher owes us something. If it were the old days, he would have already given us a beating.

How can we fail to comprehend to this extent? We do not examine what kind of thinking is in our own minds, but we still demand that other people be very strictly disciplined, and we demand that our teachers be even more strictly disciplined. This will not work. At all times we must put the emphasis on our mental activity.

When you arrive at perception of the truth, this is the *dharmakaya*, the truth-body of the buddhas. When we succeed in cultivating realization, this is the *sambhogakaya*, the reward-body of the buddhas. When we succeed in carrying out vows, this is the *nirmanakaya*, the physical manifestation of the buddhas. The three buddha-bodies are all in a moment of mind. If you cannot cultivate realization of this, there's nothing to say!

In present-day society, there is a problem with meditation work as it is ordinarily talked about. Because the whole world is in a state of psychological transformation, almost no one genuinely realizes meditative accomplishment. All that most people say about it is talk that deceives themselves and deceives others. I hope that here in our audience there are people who can really learn Buddhism, and not deceive themselves and others.

The topic of the eighty-eight bonds and compulsions is very important, very crucial. You should study this at all times, and find out how many of the eighty-eight bonds and compulsions you have gotten rid of. In *The Yogacarabhumi Shastra*, it tells all about the process of doing meditation work in the *shravaka* and bodhisattva stages. The Bodhisattva Maitreya has told us all the secrets of how to cultivate realization, and how to experience the fruit of enlightenment. All we have to do is use some wisdom, and devote ourselves wholeheartedly to reading the Bodhisattva Maitreya's teachings, and then we can discover these secrets.

If you use the books that we have mentioned in our lecture series, including all the Mahayana and Hinayana sutras and shastras, and study carefully, you are sure to benefit; you are sure to be able to realize the fruit of enlightenment.

• • •

To summarize what's been said, you need three things to succeed on the Path: to see the Path, to practice the Path, and to always be correcting yourself, to rid your conduct and behavior of defilements. Now in this entire series of lectures, we've given enough for you to be able to find the Path, and we've presented enough indications for you to be able to practice meditation and achieve *samadhi*. We've discussed what is and what isn't *samadhi* as well as the various semblance Dharmas that tend to mislead people. We've explained the use of *anapana* and contemplations on provisional existence for achieving concentration and insight, the genuine basis behind any of the methods for attainment. So what's left is for you to put energy into the effort and actually get to it. If you put your energy into cultivation work, and into the effort to correct your faults and shortcomings, you will develop enough merit to surely succeed. In this way you can become the savior of self and others.

On the Path of cultivation, you must know that everything starts with and ends with behavior. The whole Path has to do with conduct and behavior, the carrying out of vows. This is the highest truth and also the simplest truth: like a great circle, to do good and refrain from evil, is the very beginning and end of the path. Enlightenment has little to do with supernormal powers and supernatural feats, but rather with accessing our great transcendental wisdom awareness

and employing our potential for great functioning in order to help others. You now know that reaching this stage requires that we both accumulate merit and work hard at meditation so as to rid ourselves of defilements. But after they're gone, what's left is to exercise our clear functioning capacity in compassionate behavior for the welfare of others. This is carrying out vows.

So strive hard with your efforts and don't settle for simply building an intellectual edifice of cultivation, like some university professors or academicians do with Zen. Without attainment, such efforts are quite useless. Rather, throw yourself into the cultivation of realization in order to gain attainment. Seeing the Path is one thing, but you will gain power in the Path only through the cultivation of practice. The buddhas and ancients have given us all we need to know, so it's left up to you to make the effort. Don't wait until it's too late. Start now and the blessings of the Path are sure to reach you. Cultivate with your entire mind and body. Settle for no less. This is the way to succeed.

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